



Heriot-Watt University
Research Gateway

Toward an Age-Friendly City?

Citation for published version:

Woolrych, R & Gibson, N 2015, 'Toward an Age-Friendly City? Vancouver's Aging Homeless Population' *Curb Magazine*, vol. 6, no. 1.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Heriot-Watt Research Portal](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In:

Curb Magazine

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via Heriot-Watt Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

Heriot-Watt University has made every reasonable effort to ensure that the content in Heriot-Watt Research Portal complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact open.access@hw.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

CITY-REGION STUDIES CENTRE

PLACES | SPACES | PEOPLE

VOLUME 6 | ISSUE 1 | 2015 \$7.99

MAGAZINE

curo

home

social equity
in the city

less

ness

HOUSING FIRST WORKS, BUT WHY?

CULTURAL SAFETY AND HOME/JOURNEYING IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING





CURB MAGAZINE

Curb Magazine reaches municipal offices, planning departments, design firms and people interested in community development across the country. We aim to deliver engaging, policy-relevant articles to a diverse audience that explore a wide range of topics related to municipal and regional planning and governance.

ADVERTISE

Curb Magazine offers extensive advertising opportunities. Contact the City-Region Studies Centre for an advertising package at crsc@ualberta.ca or (780) 492-9957.

SPONSORSHIP

Curb Magazine relies on sponsorships from government, industry and local communities to facilitate a nation-wide discussion. To help us continue our work, please contact us about becoming an issue sponsor.

CONTRIBUTE

Curb Magazine welcomes articles on the general topics of governance, sustainability, housing, transportation, urban design and public spaces on an ongoing basis. The next issue of Curb will address the feature subject of The Ephemeral City.

FOLLOW US

To stay up-to-date with Curb Magazine: follow us on Twitter @CurbMag_CRSC and join the conversation on our blog at curbtalks.com!



HOMELESSNESS

TOPICS

CURB APPEAL

WHAT COMES BEFORE HOUSING FIRST? 2

by Kevin E. Jones and Stephanie Bailey

INFOGRAPHICS

VISUALIZING THE CITY & BEYOND COMPETITION WINNERS 15

by Avenir Creative and Mark Woytiuk

NORTHERN AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES

FROM FRAGMENTATION TO COLLABORATION: ADDRESSING HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS IN REMOTE CANADIAN COMMUNITIES 18

by Rebecca Schiff

CULTURAL SAFETY AND HOME/JOURNEYING IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES 22

by Julia Christensen

GOVERNANCE

TWITTER IS THE MESSAGE: THE #SadDonIveson EPISODE 24

by Paul Messinger et al.

CURB MAGAZINE

EDITOR

Dr. Kevin E. Jones, Director
City-Region Studies Centre,
University of Alberta

MANAGING EDITOR

Stephanie Bailey

EDITORIAL & REVIEW BOARD

Kalen Anderson
Sara Dorow
Kevin E. Jones
Paul Jones
Robert J. Summers
Rob Shields
Michael Granzow

Brittany Stares
Zachary Spicer
Jyoti Gondek
Yvonne Pronovost

EDITOR AT LARGE

Dr. Rob Shields
City-Region Studies Centre,
University of Alberta

PUBLISHER

CITY-REGION STUDIES CENTRE

Faculty of Extension –
Enterprise Square
2-184, 10230 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta

E-mail: crsc@ualberta.ca
Phone: 780.492.9957

www.crsc.ualberta.ca

ART DIRECTION & DESIGN

Iwona Faferek



City-Region
Studies Centre



@CurbMag_CRSC

www.crsc.ualberta.ca/CURBmagazine

Copyright: University of Alberta and individual contributors

Disclaimer: The opinions, findings and conclusions stated herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the City-Region Studies Centre, Faculty of Extension or the University of Alberta

Printed in Canada

FEATURES

4 A PRIMARY DISTINCTION IN THE SECONDARY SUITE DEBATE

by Jeff Doherty

6 IN THE ZONE: LESSONS IN INCLUSIONARY ZONING FROM WASHINGTON D.C.

by Chelsea Jersak

8 FROM THE RESERVE TO THE CITY: HOUSING AND ABORIGINAL
MIGRATION TO WINNIPEG

by Josh Brandon

10 THINKING OUTSIDE THE TRADITIONAL HOME OWNERSHIP BOX

by Joshua Evans and Michael Lewis

12 FROM THE FOUNDATION UP: UNDERSTANDING HOUSING
(IN)STABILITY IN THE CITY OF EDMONTON

by Laura Murphy, Laura Templeton and Laurie Schirner

14 TOWARD AN AGE-FRIENDLY CITY: VANCOUVER'S AGEING
HOMELESS POPULATION

by Ryan Woolrych and Nora Gibson

16 HOUSING FIRST WORKS, BUT WHY?

by Sam Tsemberis

20 ENTRENCHING POVERTY: THE PROBLEM WITH UNEVEN
DISTRIBUTION OF NON-MARKET HOUSING

by Cadence Bergman

26 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

by Murtaza Haider and Paul Smetanin

NOTEWORTHY

28 INFILL THE _____: WHAT WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT WHEN
WE TALK ABOUT INFILL

by Kevin E. Jones

30 MADE-IN-ALBERTA SOLUTIONS TO REGIONAL PLANNING PROBLEMS

by Allan Wallis

30 A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD? THE STUDY OF COMPREHENSIVE
TRANSPORTATION COST

by Olivier Sykes and Xavier Desjardins

31 COLOURING OUTSIDE THE LINES IN EDMONTON

by CITYlab, City of Edmonton



CITY-REGION
STUDIES CENTRE



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF EXTENSION



WHAT COMES BEFORE HOUSING FIRST?

KEVIN E. JONES and STEPHANIE BAILEY

curb
appeal

Image: "Affordable Housing, Toronto"
by Marc Falardeau [CC BY 2.0]

Earlier this year headlines across the country carried the story of the City of Medicine Hat's journey towards "ending homelessness." Well-earned praise was awarded the city for its successful implementation of a Housing First model, prioritizing quick access to independent and permanent accommodation. Yet, proclamations about the end of homelessness might be met with some raised eyebrows: "ended, that is, until the next person is homeless." While the Housing First approach has proven to effectively get people off the streets, we should not let our attention slide from the factors that lead to homelessness as well as the diversity of other housing challenges faced by municipalities. This issue of Curb thus focuses not so much on the question of how can we house the homeless, but rather on how do we begin to tackle the more complex, systemic issues that result in homelessness and precarious housing in the first place?

The need to support access to safe, secure and affordable housing options endures as an elusive objective for all municipalities, despite its constant urgency. There is attractiveness to the idea that there are discrete methods to solving what are complex and deep-rooted problems, or even the idea that there is one policy engineered to end to them all. Yet, within policy studies related to planning and municipal governance, there is recognition that things are far messier and uncertain.

Policy and planning are necessarily partial and iterative processes. What this means for housing strategies is that it will be important to recognize and build on recent successes, while continuing to address systemic causes of homelessness in ways that are open, responsive, and adaptable.

When beginning to tackle the causes of precarious housing and homelessness, it is first and foremost important to identify which groups are most vulnerable in order to target our efforts most effectively. As the contributions in this issue make clear, while homelessness affects people from all walks of life—youth, the elderly, families and immigrants alike—it continues to affect a disproportionate number of Aboriginal people across the country. With this in mind, a blanket solution for pathways to end homelessness will ultimately prove fruitless. Focusing on the Northwest Territories, Julia Christensen suggests we need instead to find approaches that take into consideration the specific needs and values of Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness, identifying the ways in which they already find their ways through homelessness. Aboriginal homelessness is not only a growing concern in Northern and remote communities, but also in major cities across the country. Contributor Josh Brandon suggests that one part of the problem resides in the fact that the Aboriginal population transitioning from reserves to city life is not adequately

supported. Streamlining processes, like obtaining identification and applying for social support services, will help make the transition for Aboriginal people new to the city more seamless. In order to more effectively address the specific needs of Aboriginal communities, our social policies need to be more informed by Aboriginal cultural values and established approaches to health and home-building.

While this issue of Curb focuses on the need for targeted and culturally sensitive social support services for housing and homelessness, it also imagines ways to rethink our business-as-usual approaches to providing affordable housing. Aside from developing new social housing units, for instance, Jeff Doherty suggests there is an opportunity to work on the level of bylaws in order to legalize secondary suites, which would help provide more affordable housing within a city's pre-existing infrastructure. In cities with low vacancy rates, like Calgary, many people are already living in so-called illegal secondary suites, but these often times fail to meet basic safety requirements. With the legalization of these suites, these cities could begin to bring these suites up to code, thereby increasing the supply of affordable and safe housing.

Taking it one step further, Joshua Evans and Michael Lewis urge us to begin questioning the very foundation of Canada's housing system by rethinking our traditional ownership model. Their research suggests that alternative

housing models may be more viable in the long-term—models like the Community Land Trust (CLT). The CLT is organized as a non-profit, multi-stakeholder organization committed to acquiring, stewarding and managing land in ways that help keep rental housing affordable. Alternatives like the CLT model would help overcome dichotomies—like market-driven vs. collectively controlled—that have historically made Canada's housing system volatile.

While we continue to struggle to find ways to best support our citizens who are precariously housed or homeless, one thing remains certain: investing in affordable housing not only protects basic human rights, but is also a sound economic investment. As quoted by the National Post, the self-proclaimed fiscally conservative Mayor of Medicine Hat, Ted Clugston, himself has noted: "You can actually save money by giving somebody some dignity and giving them a place to live." Up until this point,

the case for social housing has always been made from a social welfare perspective, lobbying government for more funding in order to provide for those who for whatever reason cannot provide for themselves.


Contributors to this issue, however, show us how investing in social housing also makes good business sense insofar as it offers wide-reaching societal benefits like cutting costs to the healthcare system. This logic seems to have made an impact across the country, where we are now seeing more and more cities adopting a Housing First model, proven to effectively house the homeless. Although Housing

“how do we begin to tackle the more complex, systemic issues that result in homelessness and precarious housing in the first place?”

First is far from being the panacea for all of Canada's complex housing and homelessness woes, it has made strides in getting people to start thinking about how these issues affect us all. And that's a good place to start.

Kevin E. Jones is the Director of the City-Region Studies Centre at the University of Alberta. Stephanie Bailey is the Managing Editor of Curb Magazine





A PRIMARY DISTINCTION IN THE SECONDARY SUITES DEBATE

JEFF DOHERTY

Images: Steve Kuno

When he was running for the Mayor's office during Calgary's 2010 municipal election, Naheed Nenshi was unequivocal about his position on secondary suites. "We need to legalize secondary suites," he said in a campaign pitch posted to YouTube, "we need to legalize them across the city, and we need to do it immediately." Five years have now passed, and the issue is still being debated by Council. Now in his second term as Mayor, Nenshi continues, along with several of his counterparts, to advocate for a blanket approval in all of city's electoral wards to encourage density and inclusivity. Although many residents, business people, and civic leaders are convinced that such an approval would improve safety and increase the supply of affordable housing, consensus has proven elusive. Part of the problem is the structure of the debate itself: when the discussion becomes heated, the technical and political aspects of the debate become so confounded and confused that Council does little more than resolve to request another study.

In the meantime, many Calgarians continue to live in the so-called illegal secondary suites because there is often little other choice in a city where the residential vacancy rate hovers between one and two percent. Unfortunately, many of these suites do not meet the basic safety requirements of the Alberta Building Code. The hazards include undersized bedroom windows, overloaded electrical panels, and long-expired or non-existent smoke and carbon dioxide detectors.

When things go badly, the results can be tragic. Indeed, Calgarians have not forgotten the 2009 house fire that killed three basement dwellers in a northwest community. Yet the safety issues can hardly be investigated or corrected because so many of Calgary's secondary suites have not in the first place received approval under the municipal land use bylaw.

It is a distinction—between safety codes and land use—that is often overlooked or obscured in the debate. The Alberta Safety Codes Act legislates how secondary suites are to be constructed, with the primary consideration being the safety of the occupants. The requirements include, for example, minimum ceiling heights, minimum window dimensions for emergency exit, fire separation between units, and interconnected smoke alarms. The document that authorizes the work is a building permit, which is issued by Building Safety Codes Officer.

The Calgary Land Use Bylaw, on the other hand, regulates through zoning where and under what circumstances secondary suites can be added to a neighbourhood as a form of land use. When it comes to land use regulations, the primary consideration is growth and development that is orderly and predictable. Land use is authorized by a development permit issued by a development authority, which could mean Council, a Municipal Planning Commission, or a Development Officer. Whereas the safety codes requirements are technical, the land use regulations are largely social and political. Although

it is absolutely required to construct or upgrade a secondary suite, a building permit can be issued only where there is a valid development permit in place.

In Calgary, it is the land use regulations that are the sticking point when it comes to the ongoing issue of secondary suites. In the low-density residential neighbourhoods, secondary suites are not listed as a form of land use that can be considered for a development permit. If a home owner would like to add a secondary suite, he or she is required to amend the land use bylaw to first have their individual parcel of land re-zoned to a land use district that allows secondary suites. It is a heavy requirement.

Land use bylaw amendments to re-zone land are normally reserved for large-scale developments—to convert commercial land to industrial land, for example, or to convert a warehouse into a residential condominium. As a policy tool, a land use bylaw amendment is an inefficient means to formalize a type of land use that already pervades the city's neighbourhoods. Not only does it socially stigmatize tenants living in secondary suites, but the amendment process, which requires notification of the surrounding properties, also has the effect of turning neighbours into enemies because there remains in the suburbs the unfair perception that renters will bring social problems.

A blanket land use approval for all single detached homes would bring more inclusivity to communities. Despite also facing resistance from suburban homeowners, other Canadian

cities, including Edmonton, Toronto, and Winnipeg, have more or less already gone that route and there are no indications that elected officials there have regretted the decision. In Lethbridge, a small city south of Calgary, Council goes further and provides grant funding to homeowners to assist with the cost of upgrades that are required for safety reasons.

As a pilot project, Council in Calgary has directed the planning department to draft land use bylaw amendments to add secondary suites as an approved land use in four of the city's 14 wards. Should the amendments pass, Calgarians in those wards will likely learn, as have residents in other cities, that the status of the individual land users within a residence, whether owner or renter, has little or no impact on their neighbourhood. But for those individuals living in the secondary suites, the new

land use rules will finally allow them and their landlords to apply for inspections and permits to ensure that their suites comply with the building code. When secondary suites are no longer a political issue, landlords can confidently tackle the technical issues to increase safety and, at the same time, increase the supply of affordable housing. Although it will only apply to certain wards, the pilot project is likely to lead to a blanket approval because it will establish the administrative structure and, importantly, the political culture that will allow Council to make secondary suites a permitted land use in all residential districts.

Jeff Doherty is a member of the Alberta Development Officers Association. His recent analysis of urban oil and gas drilling appeared in the April 2015 edition of Alberta Views.

“many Calgarians continue to live in the so-called illegal secondary suites because there is often little other choice in a city where the residential vacancy rate has, until recently, hovered between one and two percent”

IN THE ZONE: LESSONS IN INCLUSIONARY ZONING FROM WASHINGTON, DC

CHELSEY JERSAK



Already brimming with museums and monuments, these days Washington DC is filling up with another kind of amenity: people. Sitting at nearly 660,000 residents, the District has experienced a population surge of 15% since 2000. “A big change in the city occurred,” notes Cheryl Cort, Policy Director for the Coalition for Smarter Growth, “the city—having declined in population for decades—turned around and started to grow, and grow rapidly.”

The population growth in the early 2000s resulted in increased demand for housing and caused a drop in housing affordability. In response, a coalition of community groups joined forces in 2003 to encourage the City to expand its affordable housing options and adopt a mandatory inclusionary zoning program. The coalition ultimately saw its goal fulfilled: in 2011 the inclusionary zoning program delivered its first affordable units, and by 2014 nearly five hundred affordable units were in the pipeline.

WHAT IS INCLUSIONARY ZONING?

Inclusionary zoning is an affordable housing tool that requires developers of new housing to provide a portion of new dwelling units at an affordable rate, in return for compensation that offsets the cost of supplying the units. In the District of Columbia, the compensation is up to 20% additional density, but the compensation could also be variances to zoning requirements or expedited approvals—in short, anything that creates value for the developer equal to the incurred cost of supplying the affordable units.

THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF INCLUSIONARY ZONING

Inclusionary zoning is a unique tool because it is meant to provide affordable housing through the private sector development process, without the use of direct subsidies (aside from the cost of administering the program). Inclusionary zoning also provides affordable units in the same building as new market rate units, so affordable housing gets built throughout the city in locations where development is already taking place, and where there are not necessarily a lot of other affordable housing options.

At the same time, inclusionary zoning is a complex regulatory tool, and designing and administering a viable program can be a challenge. The following are a few opportunities and challenges for inclusionary zoning advocates in Alberta to keep in mind.

1) Assess Reality

In Alberta, the Municipal Government Act limits the conditions that a municipality can impose on a developer in relation to planning approvals (such as subdivision or development approval). However, if there is a willing developer, a municipality may be able to negotiate voluntary support for an affordable housing program.

Consider the following approach. In Edmonton, for example, if a developer chooses to develop a housing project using a direct control district, the city can enter into an option to acquire a portion of the dwelling units at 85% of market value. Selling the dwelling units to the municipality at a rate below

market value functions as a de facto affordable housing contribution from the developer.

Under current legislation in Alberta, a municipality risks a legal challenge if it requires a developer to make a mandatory contribution to affordable housing as a condition of a planning approval. However, Alberta is set to pass amendments to the Municipal Government Act in 2015 and 2016. Whether the province chooses to more clearly expand a municipality's ability to require affordable housing through the upcoming legislation remains to be seen.

2) Gather Support

The inclusionary zoning program in the District of Columbia was passed after several years of advocacy by a coalition of community groups, including affordable housing advocates, faith communities, and organized labour. According to Cheryl Cort, one of the original advocates, working together was not always easy. “We actually broke up and came back together a couple of times,” she recalls. But in the end their hard work paid off.

The inclusionary zoning initiative also had support from Council and some developers. According to Cort, “affordable housing was seen as a good thing. The support from Council was just there. And basically we had a number of developers say, ‘we can live with this. And it’s the right thing to do.’”

3) Determine Affordability

The inclusionary zoning program in the District of Columbia requires a portion of dwelling units to be targeted

towards residents at 50% or 80% of the area median income (AMI). The exact breakdown depends on whether the building is stick-built or steel and concrete.

To date, the vast majority (85%) of dwelling units that have been supplied under the District's inclusionary zoning program have been at 80% AMI. However, some advocates believe 80% AMI is still too expensive—and too close to the price of market rate housing—to really make a difference for low income households. "The whole idea of splitting between high and low AMI was to get more low, but in the end we got mostly 80% AMI," says Cort. "Unfortunately, 80% AMI is higher than median family income in the District of Columbia." The AMI targets will likely need to be revisited in future.

Medium and long-term affordability in condominium housing can also be affected by an increase in condominium fees. As a result, the design of an inclusionary zoning program would also need to address how to respond to a potential rise in condominium fees.

4) Be Responsive

Inclusionary zoning works best in a strong housing market when private developers are actively building new housing. When the housing market is weak, the inclusionary zoning compensation may not be enough to offset the cost to the developer of building the affordable units. This should be taken into consideration in the design phase of an inclusionary zoning program.

CONCLUSION

Inclusionary zoning is a tool to leverage activity in the private development sector to produce affordable housing. The extent to which this tool can be used in Alberta is currently limited. But changes to the Municipal Government Act—together with support for inclusionary zoning and a well-designed inclusionary zoning program—could have a significant impact on the affordable housing landscape in the province. Let's see what happens.

Chelsey Jersak is a professional planner from Alberta who spent a year living in Washington DC. She wishes to acknowledge the support of Jeneane S. Grundberg (Partner, Brownlee LLP) for reviewing the legal issues in this article.

“

Inclusionary zoning is a tool to leverage activity in the private development sector to produce affordable housing.

While the extent to which this tool can be used in Alberta is currently limited, changes to the Municipal Government Act could have a significant impact on the affordable housing landscape in the province.

”



FROM THE RESERVE TO THE CITY: HOUSING AND ABORIGINAL MIGRATION TO WINNIPEG

JOSH BRANDON

Home to Canada's largest urban Aboriginal population, Winnipeg has recently awakened to a divide that scars the city. Here, as in other Canadian cities, the Aboriginal population is disproportionately affected by a crisis in low-income housing. Due to deep-seated institutionalized poverty, Aboriginal people are among the most likely to experience homelessness, and are over-represented in housing that is overcrowded or in poor condition. Winnipeggers are now seeking solutions to more effectively address the housing needs of the city's Aboriginal people.

A recent report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, "Moving to the City: Housing and Aboriginal Migration to Winnipeg,"¹ reveals that the challenges Aboriginal migrants face in obtaining housing stem from a gap in services as they transition from federally funded programs on reserve communities to provincially funded programs off-reserve. In order to better support Aboriginal people moving to the city, the report identifies barriers to housing and offers practical recommendations that apply to urban centres across the province.

BARRIERS TO HOUSING

Housing Conditions Some Aboriginal people are pushed off reserve communities by poor housing conditions. Participants we interviewed spoke of long waiting lists for housing, overcrowding and lack of running water in their home communities. Overcrowding remains six times greater on reserve than off reserve. The shortfall of housing and poor housing conditions force many Aboriginal people to choose between bad housing in their home

communities and insecure and unaffordable housing in cities like Winnipeg.

Poverty Aboriginal people also face considerable barriers to finding housing in Winnipeg due to poverty. Aboriginal Manitobans have almost double the poverty rate as the general population (17.2 percent compared to 9.7 percent). Unemployment rates are almost three times higher for Aboriginals within the core working age population. For three quarters of Aboriginal migrants to Winnipeg, incomes remain below \$10,000 per year 15 months after arriving in the city.

Market housing is expensive and subsidized public housing is of limited availability. As a result, many people coming to Winnipeg share with friends and family members. Commonly, this arrangement is referred to as "couch surfing" but should properly be seen as overcrowding and a form of hidden homelessness, with consequent social and health impacts.

Institutional Factors The long-lasting effects of colonialism leave many Aboriginal people without the skills or resources to obtain adequate housing. In many cases, survivors are dealing with multiple generations of involvement with residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and intervention by Child and Family Services. Still deeply affected by these institutions, many survivors face a revolving door between foster care and detention centres, between jails and shelters. The Aboriginal population now faces vastly disproportionate rates of incarceration—one young person we spoke to, for instance, had already spent two terms in jail.

Urbanization People moving to an urban environment for the first time often do not know their rights and responsibilities as tenants. Many arrive with no rental history, no bank accounts and no government identification. Some tenants reported being coerced into signing leases before seeing their apartments, landlords not returning damage deposits, or other forms of exploitation.

MEETING ABORIGINAL HOUSING NEEDS

In conducting this research we worked closely with the Eagle Urban Transition Centre (EUTC), one of the only Aboriginal run service agencies of its type across Canada that help First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people as they move to the city. In the words of an EUTC Housing Coordinator, "[t]here is a disconnect between what people get on reserves communities and what they find in Winnipeg. On reserve, people take care of each other, you know everyone, and people don't let you fall through the cracks. In Winnipeg there is nothing like that, if you don't know where to go, you are on your own."

The EUTC has helped thousands of Aboriginal people with finding housing, employment, accessing health care and other services. The Centre helps educate members about their rights and responsibilities as tenants, often assisting in resolving disputes. By bringing all these resources together in one centre, they help connect their members to programs in the community.

Despite the tremendous work EUTC does already, our research found more resources are needed to ensure that all Aboriginal people in Winnipeg are securely housed. Although our recommendations are primarily directed

to Manitoba's provincial government, we recognize that all levels of government must play a role in ensuring effective, sustainable solutions to remedy Winnipeg's housing crisis. The top priorities involved in creating a more accessible housing system in the city include:

- Working with the Aboriginal community to create housing to accommodate the multi-generational and fluid family structures of many Aboriginal households.
- Increasing cooperation between levels of government so that Aboriginal migrants do not face loss of services during their transition period.
- Developing better and more secure funding for the EUTC and improving access to transition centres in other cities.
- Increasing financial opportunities through better training and jobs for Aboriginal Manitobans, and raise Employment and Income Assistance (EIA—Manitoba's social assistance program) rates to 75% of median market rent.

CLOSING THE GAP

Our research into the housing experience of Aboriginal people in Winnipeg ultimately points to a serious gap in services for migrants as they transition from reserve communities to the city. Streamlining processes for obtaining identification and applying for EIA and

other support services could help get Aboriginal people new to Winnipeg on their feet faster. Meanwhile, more funding for transitional services like those provided by EUTC are needed, both within Winnipeg and in smaller urban centres.

The divide between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Winnipeg is heightened by deep economic divisions. Nonetheless, the future of these communities is closely tied: Winnipeg can only succeed if the Aboriginal people of this city find success. Ensuring that equal access to housing is available for Aboriginal people should be a priority for all levels of government and all citizens in Winnipeg.

Josh Brandon is the housing researcher at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Manitoba. The research for the full report was generously supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, through the Manitoba Research Alliance project: Community Based Solutions to Inner City and Aboriginal Poverty.

Further Reading

¹Brandon, J., & Peters, E. (2014). *Moving to the City: Housing and Aboriginal Migration in Winnipeg*. Winnipeg, Canada: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Retrieved from <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/moving-city>

“

Streamlining processes for obtaining identification and applying for EIA and other support services could help get Aboriginal people new to Winnipeg on their feet faster.

”

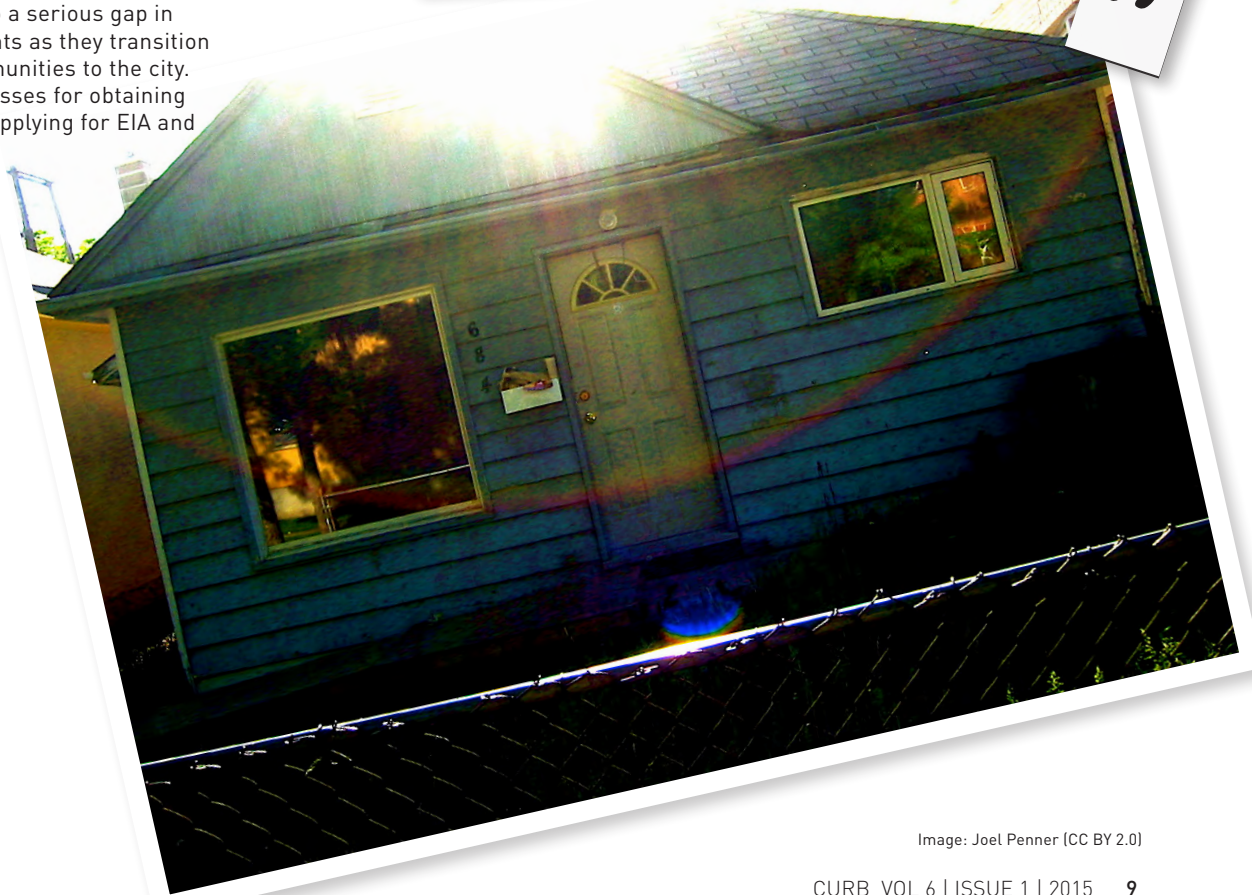
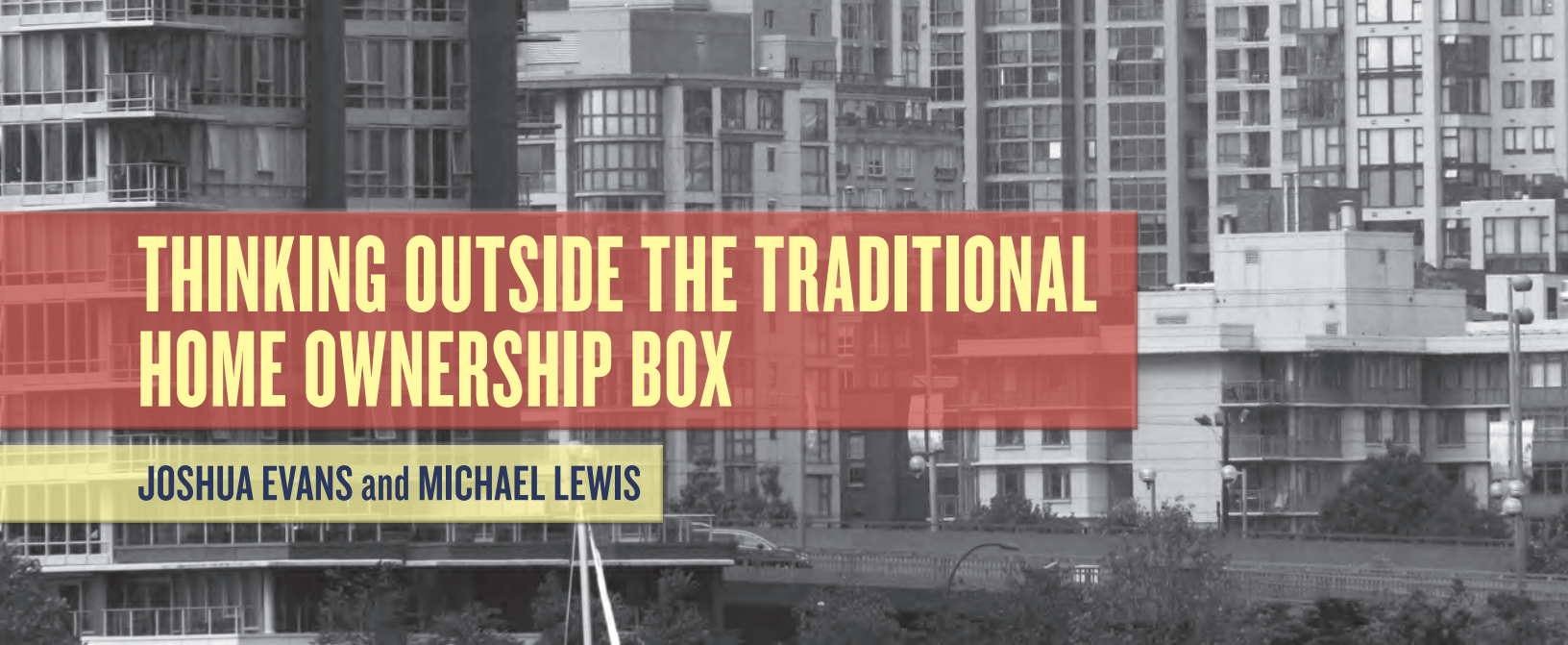


Image: Joel Penner (CC BY 2.0)



THINKING OUTSIDE THE TRADITIONAL HOME OWNERSHIP BOX

JOSHUA EVANS and MICHAEL LEWIS

Housing is the bedrock of urban life. It is foundational to personal development, social and economic wellbeing, and to overall standards of living and quality of life. Housing is also a commodity. An overwhelming majority of the 13.3 million households in Canada obtain housing through the private market. It is generally agreed that Canada's housing system is, in practice, market-driven and primarily orientated around private homeownership. But this "ownership model" is not without its problems, especially when it comes to issues related to social equity.

Today, housing affordability problems are rife in many urban and high amenity communities in Canada. Vancouver is perhaps the extreme case. An average three-bedroom bungalow built in the post-war early 1950s originally sold for \$14,500 in the west end Kerrisdale neighborhood—3.5 years of a carpenter wage. The same house went for \$1.6 million just 60 years later—33 times the annual wage of a carpenter.

How does this happen? True, wages have been relatively flat for a large part of the population for the last 4 decades. Fewer and fewer people can fit within the conventional affordable housing target: 30% of gross household income. In 2011, this number was over 3.3 million households.

Wages, while obviously important, cannot hold a candle to a much more powerful influence: the dynamic embedded in the private property market, where 69% of Canadian households (or 9.2 million homeowners)

participate in its ups and its downs. The problem for high amenity communities is the prices just keep going up. The causes can be diverse—population increase, rapid economic growth and uplift in the housing market—stemming from public and private investments that increase the attractiveness of a particular place.

Most of us know how it works. If one qualifies for a mortgage and is prone to thinking of housing not only as a home, but also an investment, homework is done to position oneself in a location that may be able to ride the uplift of other's investments. The profits can be enormous for householders and other real estate owners.

Consider the £3.5 billion public investment in the Jubilee subway line in London, England. The private property within 1000 yards of each station increased in "value" by £13 billion, a windfall that went mostly to corporate landlords. Not surprisingly rents soared—a fine example of public investment accruing to private pockets and ordinary renters paying the price. But what if the value created by public and other private investment could be captured so it goes onto the community balance sheet rather than as unearned income into private pockets? The answer to this question is hugely important because if it is possible, progress on affordability is conceivable. The Community Land Trust mode provides one such answer.

THE COMMUNITY LAND TRUST: A PROVEN MODEL

The Community Land Trust (CLT) model is organized as a non-profit, multi-stakeholder organization committed to acquiring, stewarding and managing land in ways that keep the owner occupied or rental housing upon it affordable in perpetuity.

The CLT tenure does this by separating the ownership of the land from the ownership of the buildings on it. The land is retained forever in trust by the CLT for community benefit. In short, it effectively and permanently removes the land from the market. By contrast, buildings on the CLT's land can be owned by a variety of entities—a single-family household, a co-operative, a non-profit, or even a small business.

CLT land is never sold to the inhabitants; it is leased. Written into the lease are clauses that restrict the owner occupant from pocketing the profit from an upswing in the market, unlike the normal private property owner. The lease has a resale formula that may share some of the equity upswing but the greatest portion of the unearned profit stays on the community balance sheet. The CLT exercises this power through a pre-emptive right to buy housing units when they are resold. The departing owner has the contractual obligation to sell their housing back to the CLT at a price set by the resale formula.

And it works. There are over 260 CLTs in the U.S. extending from rural villages to initiatives that cover entire cities or counties. The Champlain Housing Land

Trust in Burlington, Vermont is one of the best-known examples. Between 1984 and 2009 the CLT had built and otherwise acquired over 2500 units of owner occupied houses and rental units. Burlington is a high amenity community that started the CLT because of upward pressure on house prices. Astoundingly, their housing stock has *increased in affordability* by 20% over the last 20 years.¹

Such results had already begun to attract municipalities who in the U.S. are important players in affordable housing. After the housing meltdown they became even more interested in the robustness of the CLT land stewardship model. Across the U.S. CLTs radically out performed sub-prime and conventional mortgages in terms of both delinquencies and foreclosures.² In both categories CLT housing proved itself much more stable. Losses hardly registered whereas they were high in conventional mortgages and soared in sub-prime.

STEMMING THE TIDE OF URBAN SOCIAL INEQUITY: SCALING UP CLTs

The potential of CLTs for addressing social inequities in Canada's housing landscape is substantial. First, CLTs *lock in affordability*. The rising cost of housing has put incredible strain on household finances and has made housing itself out of reach for some. These affordability problems are most acute among low-income groups such as lone-parents who experience enormous difficulty finding housing they can afford. While social housing exists in principal to address these affordability problems government subsidies have precipitously shrunk over the last 25 years resulting in inadequate supply.³

Second, CLTs *can help alleviate housing related indebtedness*. The rising cost of housing is driving the accumulation of record levels of household debt. Households in Canada's large, metro regions are, generally speaking, the most indebted. Household indebtedness is greatest in the suburban fringes and in gentrifying inner city neighborhoods where young families, immigrants to Canada, single parents, and low-income households are disproportionately affected.⁴

Third, CLTs *can help preserve neighborhood diversity*. Rapid increases in house prices have deleterious consequences for social equity at the neighborhood level. The gentrification process tends to decrease levels of social mix and increase income inequality; in other words, neighbourhoods that rapidly appreciated in terms of their land values often see reductions in their share of immigrants, visible minorities and low-income households, becoming "whiter and wealthier" in the process.⁵

Alternatives to Canada's traditional ownership model are badly needed to address these fundamental problems, alternatives that transcend rigid dichotomies—privately owned vs. publically owned, market-driven vs. collectively controlled, owners vs. renters—that have structured tenure norms in Canada's housing system. CLTs are one such alternative.

Joshua Evans is Assistant Professor of Human Geography in the Centre for Social Sciences at Athabasca University. Michael Lewis leads the Canadian Centre for Community Renewal and the B.C. Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance and is active in several international networks.

Further Reading

¹Lewis, M. and Conaty, P. (2012). *The Resilience Imperative: Cooperative Transitions to a Steady-State Economy*. New Society Publishers: Gabriola Island, B.C.

²Thaden, E. (2010). *Outperforming the market: Making sense of the low rates of delinquencies and foreclosures in community land trusts*. National Community Land Trust Network: Portland, OR.

³Gaetz, S., Gulliver, T., and Richter, T. 2014. *The State of Homelessness in Canada 2014*. Homelessness Hub Press: Toronto, ON

⁴Walks, A. (2013). *Mapping the Debtscape: The Geography of Household Debt in Canadian Cities*, *Urban Geography*, 34(2), 153-187.

⁵Walks, A. and Maaranen, R. (2008). *Gentrification, Social Mix, and Social Polarization: Testing the Linkages in Large Canadian Cities*. *Urban Geography*, 29(4), 293-326.

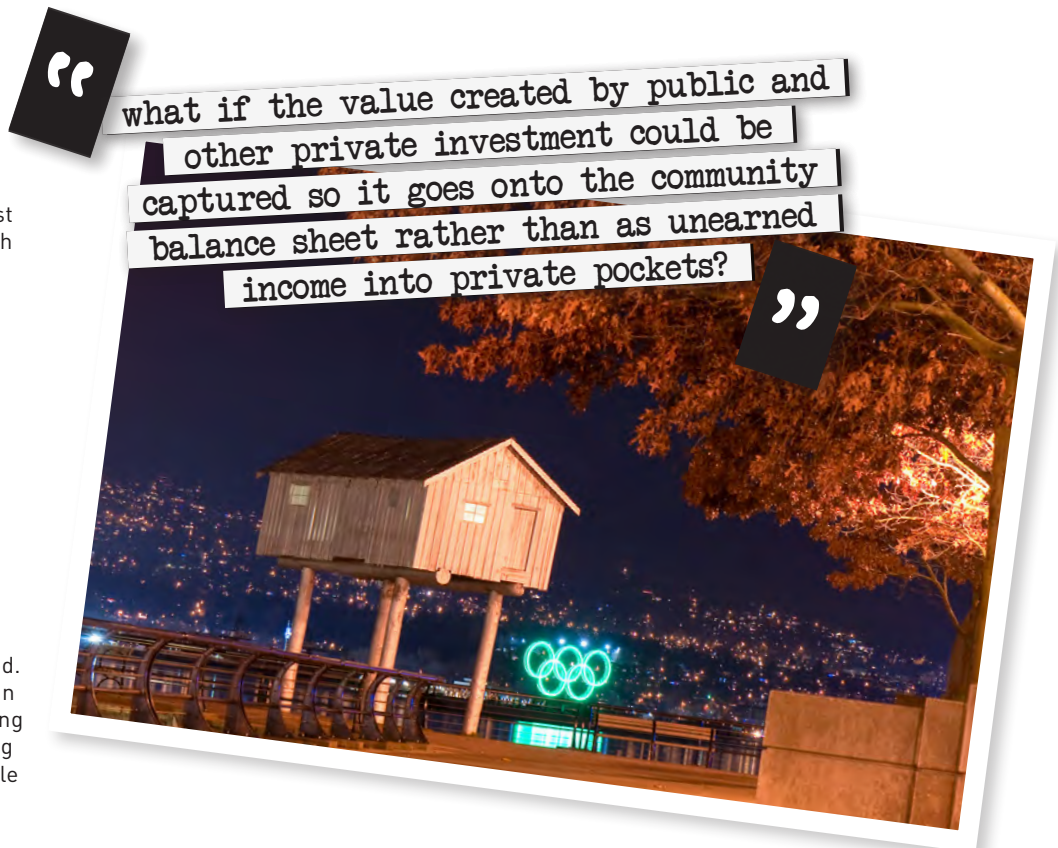


Image: "252/365" by Kenny Louie (CC by 2.0)



FROM THE FOUNDATION UP: UNDERSTANDING HOUSING (IN)STABILITY IN THE CITY OF EDMONTON

LAURA MURPHY, LAURA TEMPLETON and LAURIE SCHNIRER

Every year, tens of thousands of people move to the city of Edmonton, eager to secure a foothold in a city synonymous with opportunity and prosperity. There exists, however, an incongruity between popular perception and the lived reality in this “land of plenty.” On the one hand, Edmonton is cast as an economically thriving city, a place where young families can put down roots and invest in their futures. On the other, sobering statistics reveal that families are struggling—even during the good times. While many prosper when oil is flowing in Alberta, an economic boom increases the cost of living, widening pre-existing income disparities.

Using findings from Families First Edmonton (FFE), a study of 1,200 low-income families, we reveal how boom times actually made things worse for families living near the poverty line. Housing barriers intensified, as public policy was unprepared to protect low-income families from a surging economy and low vacancy rates. Here, we explore how low-income families were impacted by Alberta’s (and Edmonton’s) boom time, and what housing (in)stability looks like in a prosperous Canadian city and province.

Alberta experienced an economic boom from 2003-2008 due to energy sector investment and oil revenues. During this time, researchers at the Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families engaged with low-income families about basic needs (including housing) in a community-based longitudinal study. Many of the families who participated in FFE were living paycheck to paycheck, with little to no room to buffer any unforeseen or additional costs. Without

caps on rent increases, landlords quickly raised rents to reflect market demand. Many families experienced rental increases, some up to \$800/month—not just once, but two times within one year. (As of 2007, landlords can only raise rents once annually). Discriminatory practices abounded. Rents were variably increased between units within the same apartment block, a mechanism used by landlords to “weed out” particular tenants in favour of those perceived more desirable. Large families as well as newcomer and Indigenous families were more likely to experience this form of discrimination. Refugees, often dependent on landlords for character references in landed immigrant claims, were left especially vulnerable.

The power differential between landlords and their financially and often politically-marginalized tenants meant that landlords could neglect necessary repairs, resulting in unsafe and unhealthy conditions. Faulty plumbing for one family resulted in hot water gushing down the bathtub drain, consequently increasing the family’s water and heating costs. One single mother erected a piece of plywood to cover a hole where a back door should have been. Some families, in particular those who received large rent increases, fell behind in their rent. For those who received eviction notices the situation was even worse. Facing homelessness, and without security deposits or personal references, these families had to find affordable homes in a market where the average monthly rent for a two-bedroom apartment shot up 41% between 2005-2008 from \$732 to \$1,034. With affordable units already in short supply, the housing stock for renters was further diminished when landlords


converted entire apartment blocks into privately-owned condos.

Families resorted to a number of strategies. Some families “doubled up” and lived with friends, partners, or family but often at the cost of over-crowding and straining family relationships. Others became more reliant on social assistance and housing subsidies. Another tactic was to move to areas with less expensive rent, which often meant living in areas that were less safe (higher rates of criminal activity) or less convenient. Moving to areas farther from the downtown core presented new challenges, such as increased difficulty accessing social supports, transportation barriers (expensive, poor service), children having to change schools, and a lack of familiarity with a new neighbourhood.

In the absence of a national housing policy, and the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s end of operating agreements, local and provincial levels of government need to work collaboratively and creatively on housing strategies.

In consideration of the recent proceedings at the 2015 Canadian Housing and Renewal Association’s Congress, as well as the Mayor of Edmonton’s commitment to eliminating poverty in the city of Edmonton, we propose the following as next steps on how housing inclusivity can be improved:

- Ongoing needs assessments on affordable housing shortages, inclusive of all low-income households, such as larger/multi-family households, seniors, students/youth, and availability of physically accessible units. These assessments should also consider the source of the shortage (i.e. stock versus affordability, as well as current condition).



In the absence of a national housing policy, and the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation's end of operating agreements, local and provincial levels of government need to work collaboratively and creatively on housing strategies.

- A better understanding of the mechanisms of housing (in) stability for low-income families to promote speedier exits, and to support those entrenched in poverty.
- Rental caps to preserve existing affordable housing.
- Continued support of repair programs for landlords with affordable units and low-income homeowners. This is vital for maintaining current stock and reducing utility costs.
- Expanded incentives for respectful infill developments—including private owners building secondary suites or developers investing in mixed-use projects—to expand and integrate affordable housing. For example, Winnipeg's provincial and city tax increment financing grants have sustainably increased downtown affordable housing stock alongside market housing and commercial developments. Further, this creates housing options for families transitioning toward stability and wanting to remain in the same neighbourhood.
- Prioritization of pedestrian travel in conjunction with accessible public transportation initiatives to improve neighbourhood inclusivity and community cohesion.

These steps are critical as recent estimates suggest 42% of Albertans are living paycheck to paycheck and are at greater risk of housing instability or eventual homelessness. Contributing to the overall well-being of individuals, families, and communities, housing stability is ultimately an issue that concerns all citizens.

For more information, please contact Families First Edmonton at www.familiesfirstedmonton.ualberta.ca or Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families at www.cup.ualberta.ca

Laura Murphy is a Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology at Western University. Laura Templeton, Ph.D., is a researcher with the Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families in the Faculty of Extension at the University of Alberta. Laurie Schnirer, Ph.D., is the Interim Director of the Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families in the Faculty of Extension at the University of Alberta.

Further Reading

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2014). *Canadian Housing Observer 2014: Recent Trends in Housing Affordability and Core Housing Need A Chapter from the Canadian Housing Observer*. Ottawa, Canada: CMHC. Retrieved from: http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/corp/about/cahoob/upload/housing_affordability_and_need_68193_w.pdf

Edmonton Social Planning Council. (2015). *A Profile of Poverty in Edmonton*. Edmonton, Canada: ESPC. Retrieved from <https://www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca/index.php/resources/digital-resources/a-espcc-documents/a06-newsletters/a06c-research-updates/243-a-profile-of-poverty-in-edmonton/file>

Shapcott, M., Blickstead, R., Gardner, B., & Roche, B. (2010). *Precarious Housing in Canada*. Toronto, Canada: Wellesley Institute.



TOWARD AN AGE-FRIENDLY CITY: VANCOUVER'S AGING HOMELESS POPULATION

RYAN WOOLRYCH and NORA GIBSON

A Changing Skyline in Vancouver's Downtown East Side. Image: Nora Gibson.

What is an age-friendly city? Put simply, it is a place that prioritizes accessibility and inclusivity, enabling people of all ages to actively participate in community activities. It is also a place that supports those who can no longer support themselves, while maintaining their sense of dignity. One of the key factors in designing an age-friendly city is creating opportunities for aging-in-place, where people can retain a sense of independence, belonging, and well-being throughout the course of their life. Although public discourse around age-friendly cities and communities has grown in recent years, little attention has been afforded vulnerable older adults, including homeless seniors.

This is an issue of concern in Vancouver in light of the most recent Greater Vancouver Homeless Count, which reveals that the homeless population is aging: seniors now account for 18% of the homeless population in the Greater Vancouver region, up from 9% in 2011. And those who are at-risk of becoming homeless in old age are only projected to increase as Vancouver's housing market becomes more and more heated.

Vancouver's aging homeless population raises specific challenges in terms of the ways in which we plan and design our neighbourhoods to support older adults. Recent consultations we conducted with stakeholders from local government, community groups, homeless service providers, and those with lived experience of homelessness across Metro Vancouver revealed that current processes of urban planning aimed at "rebranding the city" have negative consequences for precariously housed older adults.¹

The gentrification of certain neighbourhoods continues to displace older adults from their communities, disrupting their social network, and increasing the risk of homelessness. For example, our research revealed that low-income older adults are being increasingly displaced from the West End of Vancouver by landlords who can command higher rents. In the Downtown East Side, senior Aboriginal and Chinese communities are being pushed out in favour of young professionals, resulting in a community with amenities that no longer support seniors. With a dire lack of affordable housing in the city, older adults are left with few options.

For those seniors already experiencing homelessness, our dialogue sessions with stakeholders also suggested that existing housing support services are largely failing to meet the complex needs of older adults. An aging population is a significant challenge for frontline services, particularly emergency shelter supports, which often lack the necessary expertise and knowledge, accessibility, and healthcare services on-site. While there has been a move to low barrier shelters, the existing restrictions still prove to be prohibitive for homeless seniors. Restrictions such as no personal possessions, no pets, and specific entry and exit times compromise the independence that many felt they had on the street, or while living independently—ultimately deterring people from seeking intervention.

Moreover, there are a limited number of Single Room Occupancy shelters across Metro Vancouver and those that are available often do not meet the needs of seniors, whether it is due to poor housing conditions or lack of social

services. And finally, permanent housing, when available, also fails to support the needs of the elderly in terms of accessibility, as it is rarely conveniently located or close to transportation networks. When determining the provision and availability of housing for vulnerable seniors, a location in close proximity to amenities and services is key.

The issue of senior homelessness is an emerging and growing challenge to which urban planners and developers need to respond. In order to build a more age-friendly city we need to design housing and community supports to provide the conditions for aging-in-place, fostering a sense of community belonging and place attachment. For homeless seniors, our research also indicates a need for more appropriate emergency services as well as transitional and permanent housing options that consider the specific needs of older adults. Ultimately, addressing the issue of senior homelessness is not just about recognizing housing as a basic human right, but recognizing the valuable role older adults play within society.

Ryan Woolrych and Nora Gibson are members of the GVSS Homeless Seniors Community of Practice (CoP). Responding to increasing numbers of homeless seniors in Metro Vancouver, the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy Society (GVSS) created the Homeless Seniors Community of Practice (HSCP) to support decision making and inform action toward addressing homelessness amongst older adults.

Further Reading:

¹ Woolrych, R., Gibson, N., Sixsmith, A., & Sixsmith, J. (in press). *No home, no place: Addressing the complexity of homelessness in old age through community dialogue*. *Journal of Housing for the Elderly*.

VISUALIZING THE CITY AND BEYOND: INFOGRAPHIC COMPETITION WINNERS

The University of Alberta's Henry Marshall Tory Chair and Curb Magazine are pleased to present the winners from our first annual infographic competition: Visualizing the City and Beyond.

For this competition, we asked participants to visually represent an aspect of urban life, with a focus on social topics, data, and phenomena. Entrants tackled a variety of issues from global warming and urbanization to growth and density in Vancouver.

Do you love data visualization, information design, or information architecture? Email our Managing Editor at curb@ualberta.ca for details regarding next year's competition!

[1] By Avenir Creative
EDUCATION: WHAT IS YOUR BACHELOR'S DEGREE WORTH?

[2] By Mark Woytiuk:
THE RETAIL DETAIL

If we think of our city as a complex floor plan, with specified areas dedicated to particular human activities, this graphic shows what our retail territories would look like if they were concentrated in one place. The current average of retail space in the United States is 4.2 m²/person, whereas in the United Kingdom it is 0.36 m²/person.

It is common practice to evaluate development potential by forecasting the amount of retail space that should serve a given population. The retail floor space ratio thus can be found in proposals for shopping malls and other consumerist ventures. In addition to serving as a metric to measure future development potential, this ratio helps to reflect the character of each city by intimating what the city offers to its citizens.

EDUCATION

WHAT IS YOUR BACHELOR'S DEGREE WORTH?

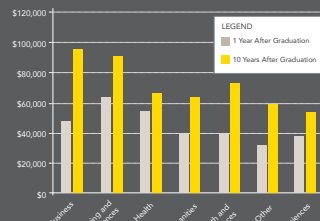


FACULTY GROUP COMPARISON



ANNUAL EARNINGS AFTER GRADUATION

Comparison of mean annual earnings in each faculty group, 1 year after graduation and 10 years after graduation.¹

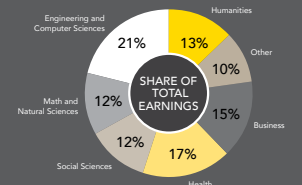


Graduates from the Business faculty have the highest earnings 10 years after graduation, with a mean annual earnings of:

\$96,100

30%

More than the average of all faculty groups.



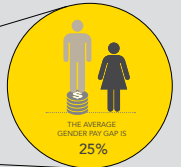
Comparison of first year mean annual earnings of each faculty group to the total earnings of the graduating class.²



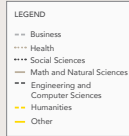
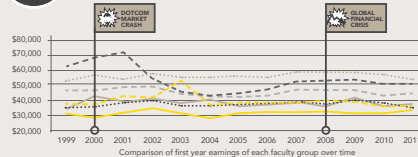
GENDER COMPARISON

MALE VS FEMALE PAY GAP

Comparison of mean annual earnings between male and female over 10 years after graduation.³



BOOM BUST COMPARISON



Four years after the DotCom market crash, graduates from the Engineering and Computer Sciences experienced the highest drop in first year earnings of:

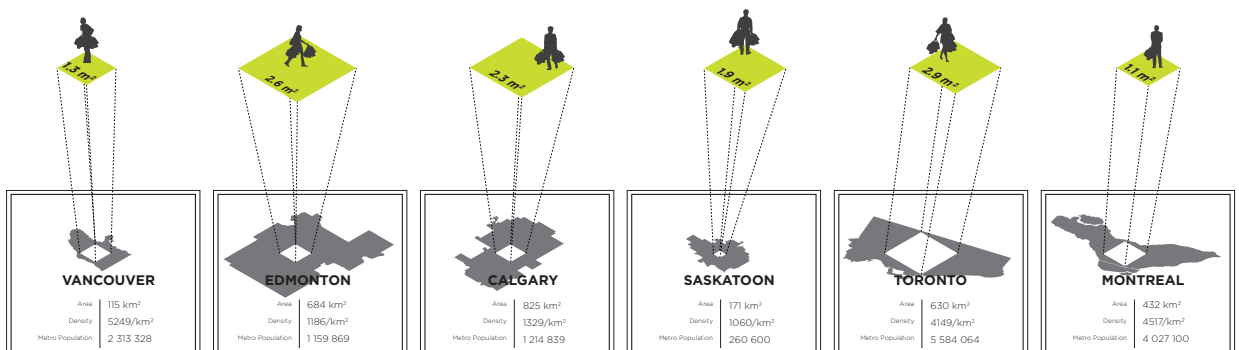
NOTE: Data based on mean earnings of graduates that graduated from the University of Ottawa in 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001. Data based on mean earnings of graduates that graduated from the University of Ottawa in 1998.

SOURCE: Fortin, R., Chabot, S., Pavia, D., & Jermine, N. (2014). How Much Do University Graduates Earn (Research Brief No. 3). Retrieved from <http://www.business.uottawa.ca/press-releases/index.asp>

avenircreative

THE RETAIL DETAIL

- retail floor space/person
- retail floor space as a measure of civic territory



HOUSING FIRST WORKS, BUT WHY?

SAM TSEMBERIS



In May of 2015, Ted Clugston, the Mayor of Medicine Hat, announced that the city had effectively ended chronic homelessness by transitioning to a Housing First (HF) model. The announcement made waves in the Canadian press, which touted the achievement of Medicine Hat as a victory for the HF model and Canadian policy. But what is HF exactly, and why has it proved more successful with housing the chronically homeless than other models?

HF shifts the paradigm of how Canada helps some of its 200,000 homeless. It does so by reversing the traditional homeless services approach that is based on the beliefs and practices that, though well-intentioned, make it difficult for people to exit homelessness. Most traditional programs require those among the homeless with mental health and addiction problems to first participate in treatment and attain sobriety as a precondition to entering housing. However, these programs do not have high rates of success because mental illness and addiction are much more difficult to cure than homelessness. Those who insist on treatment before housing misunderstand the capabilities of the cohort of homeless who suffer from mental illness and addiction. Traditional programs work from the belief that this group cannot be trusted to manage a household unless they first address their symptoms and achieve sobriety.

Let's consider these assumptions based on our observation of the people we walk by on the streets every day. On a quick

glance the person may appear helpless, but he or she is actually managing to survive in a hostile environment. Living on the street takes resilience, persistence, and common sense. People who on a daily basis can survive homelessness—secure food, find a place to sleep, and stay safe—can certainly survive being housed, especially when they have support. So, why do we hold the homeless to a different standard for obtaining housing than the rest of the population? Do we expect non-homeless Canadians who may be drinking or have mental health problems to first be sober and receive mental health treatment in order to obtain housing? Are we not in fact discriminating against the homeless by having such program requirements? If all landlords required proof of sobriety and treatment for mental health problems as a precondition for renting apartments, our homeless population would be in the millions.

Why then do we hold our poorest citizens to a higher standard for obtaining housing than the rest of the population? "The poor," "the mentally ill," and "the addicts" are all too often regarded as "less than," "not as capable," "not as hard working," or "not concerned with the same life pursuits" as the rest of us. These subtle and long-standing biases lead to unwarranted assumptions about the reasons why people become homeless. The homeless are thought to have problems because they make poor choices or they lack moral character rather than because they lack cash. This view attributes personal factors as the root causes of poverty and often disregards the enormous impact of

the economic and social structures that result in the disparities of opportunity between those who are poor and those with means. Thus many programs developed for the poor focus on improving character, like attaining sobriety or teaching the poor about making the right choices rather than addressing their real, fundamental, and urgent needs: a place to live, money, and access to goods, education, jobs, and social or cultural opportunities.

HF is a paradigm shift based on the belief that housing is a basic human right. It provides those who are homeless and have complex problems immediate access to an apartment of their own. Support services are the other essential aspect of a HF program and ensure that people succeed in their tenancy and can address other needs, including treatment, employment, and other services. Treatment teams comprised of social workers, nurses, and peer specialists meet the clients where they are and work with them to achieve their goals. Choice is a key element of the HF philosophy. Program participants must agree to pay thirty percent of their income toward their rent, abide by the terms and conditions of a standard lease and a weekly home visit by the treatment team. Clients have an active voice in the program and can select the type, sequence, and pace of services. They are encouraged to make choices, take risks, and dream about a hopeful future.

Over 20 years of research shows that HF has a greater success rate for housing individuals who have been homeless for years. Most HF programs

in Canada, the United States, and Europe report an 85% housing success (i.e. getting and keeping housing). The Mental Health Commission of Canada recently completed a five year study of HF, called At Home/Chez Soi, across five cities (Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, and Moncton). 2,241 individuals who had been homeless for an average of five years or more and who had complex mental health, addiction and physical health problems participated in the study. Results indicated that HF participants achieved a 75% rate of housing stability compared to 35% for traditional program. In addition, it was less expensive to provide HF than treatment as usual.

The government of Canada is now using these findings to shape national policy. Beginning in 2016, communities that receive federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) funds will be expected to invest about 50% of these dollars in implementing HF programs. While some shelters and traditional

programs have felt threatened by this mandate for funding, it is important to note that this is a rare example of the government using research and science to inform social policy. These changes will go a long way in providing people who are homeless with permanent housing and support and reducing chronic homelessness. The widespread introduction of HF may also serve to change some long held discriminatory beliefs and practices about those who are homeless and what they really need to improve their lives.

Today, communities from Newfoundland to British Columbia are engaged in the difficult work of building successful HF programs. One of the greatest challenges that these communities face is providing choices for participants that are sensitive to the multi-ethnic and multi-racial mosaic of the homeless population. What we have learned through HF is that while the population that is homeless is diverse, everyone can benefit by having immediate access to a

simple, decent, affordable apartment, and the right support services.

With the wide-spread embrace of HF, many have championed the model as the way to end homelessness everywhere. While the model successfully houses those who are homeless, we cannot end homelessness until we address the social and economic policies and practices that continue to result in income disparity and poverty. The success in Medicine Hat shows that with the right policies, programs, and financial commitment, we can end chronic homeless in Canada. However, to ensure that we are doing more than becoming more efficient at housing the homeless, we must develop the political will to eliminate the systemic issues that, for far too many, result in homelessness.

Sam Tsemberis is the founder and CEO of Pathways to Housing. Pathways developed the Housing First model based on the belief that housing is a basic right for all.

Images: Pathways to Housing

“Most traditional programs require those among the homeless with mental health and addiction problems to first participate in treatment and attain sobriety as a precondition to entering housing. However, these programs do not have high rates of success because mental illness and addiction are much more difficult to cure than homelessness.”

”

FROM FRAGMENTATION TO COLLABORATION: HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS IN REMOTE CANADIAN COMMUNITIES

REBECCA SCHIFF

northern and
remote
communities

Image: "Goose Bay, Labrador" by Axel Drainville
(CC BY-NC 2.0)

Visible homelessness is on the rise across Canada's North, which may come as a surprise given the current rate of economic development. In recent years, the continuous population and economic growth—rather than increasing the standard of living—has caused the housing costs to become severely inflated, leaving few to no options for those living on middle, low, and fixed incomes. The situation is most dire for low and fixed income recipients, as affordable and rent-geared-to-income social housing units cannot keep pace with demand.

Meanwhile, public services and the private market are struggling to develop housing at all. Not only is there a lack of land viable for development, but municipalities are also limited in their capacity to develop land to provide services (e.g. waste disposal, sewage, etc.) due to lack of funding. The housing shortage may be exacerbated by the rapid economic change, but it is rooted in a long history of inadequate governance and planning for northern housing. The time has come to work towards more collaborative, local-level responses to addressing the diverse needs of communities across the North. As it stands now, government oversight of housing-related issues is often fragmented, having little cohesive oversight at municipal, regional, and provincial levels. Although provincial-level housing corporations can address a number of housing-related issues,

there is a significant lack of coordination between the various sectors dealing with construction, sales, residential tenancies, and social services. Each of these various housing-related government and industry bodies have their own policies and regulations to govern their own sectors of these critical systems, thereby creating policy vacuums.

The absence of collaborative planning for housing leads to gaps, duplication, and inadequacies in decision-making processes at all geopolitical levels. Despite the significance of housing to healthy development in the North, current governance structures are not able to provide coordinated oversight of the growth and changing needs of the population. New forms of governance that are flexible and adaptable are thus needed to respond to the diverse and rapidly changing northern communities. There exists today a growing body of evidence that suggests collaborative, systems-level networks can act as a powerful method for creating localized responses to homelessness across North America.

The applicability, however, of such approaches in northern or remote communities remains largely unexplored. A closer look at one remote, northern community in particular that has taken steps towards building local, collaborative efforts may provide guidance for new pathways to housing security in this region.

In 2006, representatives of various government and community-based organizations formed a working group to draft a community plan to address homelessness in the town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay (HVGB), located in the Lake Melville region of central Labrador. With a population of approximately 7,500, it is the largest community in Labrador and serves as the administrative center for the region. Following the public release of the community plan in 2007, a Community Advisory Board on housing and homelessness (CAB) was formed to guide its implementation.

The priorities and action items identified in the plan were not insignificant tasks, yet the HVGB CAB was able to address many priorities within a few years of implementation. However, while community plans investigate issues of infrastructure and service provision, they do little in terms of identifying the organizational strategies needed for CABs to effectively address challenges in systems-level collaborative efforts. The experiences of the HVGB CAB point to three critical factors for building capable and resilient collaborative structures around northern housing and homelessness issues:

1. **"Stage setting" through community planning:** The community planning process was critical to building a solid foundation and direction for the CAB's work. The activity surrounding creation of the plan raised awareness throughout

the community and created an environment of heightened attention to housing and homelessness issues. Essentially, the community plan process was setting the stage for the cultivation of partnerships, community concern, understanding the issues, and investment in solutions.

2. Diversity of membership: The CAB purposefully sought to ensure a diverse, cross-sectoral membership, engaging partners from a multitude of sectors and from various levels of government and non-profit organizations. Homelessness issues cross multiple domains (e.g. health, education, industry, infrastructure, housing, Aboriginal community services) and levels of government (municipal, provincial, federal, Aboriginal). Therefore, the diversity of membership, brought about through a deliberate cross-sectoral approach, ensured the capacity to implement multi-pronged solutions.

3. Flexibility to work with emerging opportunity: The CAB often moulded its activities to adapt to any opportunities as they arose, such as unique funding opportunities, utilizing sudden donations

of in-kind resources, and using community events or news items as opportunities for public outreach and education. The greatest degree of success in this approach came when group members were able to drop an activity that was proving unproductive at a particular point and move on to new opportunities and ideas.

Despite success in implementation of plans, there were still some organizational challenges that affected the group's ability to function cohesively and effectively. Based on the HVGB case study, it is clear that in order to establish and maintain inclusive collaborative efforts in homelessness planning in the Canadian North, CABs will need ongoing support from funders for organisational structuring, coordination, and strategic planning. At the nexus of these issues is the role of staff in implementing community plans. Many Canadian CABs, and especially those in remote and northern communities, lack staff support. Staff often fill a pivotal role in providing leadership and direction for homelessness collaborations.

Support for CAB coordinators, with authority that is independent from provincial and federal government, will prove to be critical in effectively addressing homelessness in other northern and remote communities.

Dr. Rebecca Schiff is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Health Sciences at Lakehead University. Her research explores determinants of community health and wellbeing with a particular focus on marginalised communities.

Further Reading

¹ Schiff, R. (2015). Northern Housing Networks: Building Collaborative Efforts to Address Housing and Homelessness Remote Canadian Aboriginal Communities in the Context of Rapid Economic Change. *Journal of Rural and Community Development*. 10(1).

“

Despite the significance of housing to healthy development in the North, current governance structures are not able to provide coordinated oversight for the growth and changing needs of the population

”

ENTRENCHING POVERTY: THE PROBLEM WITH UNEVEN DISTRIBUTION OF NON-MARKET HOUSING

CADENCE BERGMAN

How can we revitalize our neighbourhoods in meaningful and lasting ways? History has shown that investment in sidewalks and frontage cannot make up for the lack of a healthy school, and graffiti removal will not, on its own, encourage business investment. Struggling communities are often confronted with systemic issues such as a high concentration of subsidized housing. Facing discrimination in the housing market, these communities become less desirable for families looking to set down roots, eventually resulting in the closure of public schools and other businesses. As a result, the structural disadvantage becomes more and more entrenched, making any revitalization effort less and less likely to succeed.

In October 2012, in response to determined advocacy by local community residents, Edmonton City Council passed a three-year moratorium on non-market housing, covering five inner-city neighbourhoods. Non-market housing is constructed or operated through government funding and can include seniors' housing, affordable housing, and supportive housing for people who need ongoing community services. The idea of a moratorium on non-market housing for distressed neighbourhoods wasn't new, and city administration had spent years grappling with the issue. Residents were frustrated that their voices were not being heard, felt that their local efforts to renew their communities were being hampered by city council decisions, and that their protests were being unfairly characterized as nimbysism.

Edmonton's most distressed neighbourhoods—Central MacDougall and McCauley—have overall levels of poverty over 40 percent, and nearby communities of Alberta Avenue, Queen Mary Park, and Eastwood are over

30 percent. The five moratorium neighbourhoods, which together represent only 4.6 per cent of the city's total housing, have 20 percent of the city's affordable housing, 58 per cent of the supportive housing, and 84 per cent of the city's shelter space (2012).

The Government of Alberta and the City of Edmonton have poverty reduction plans based on the Housing First philosophy, which calls for the provision of no-strings-attached, permanent housing for vulnerable citizens. One of the principles of Housing First is that units are dispersed to prevent the formation of ghettos or distressed neighbourhoods. Alberta announced a \$1.1-billion plan to build 11,000 units in the mid-2000s, and despite the goal of spreading out non-market housing, the concentration increased. Edmonton saw \$223 million, and a third of the total units funded were built in four of the city's most distressed neighbourhoods.¹

The community asked for a more widespread solution over a 10-year period, but Council was concerned that such a long-standing ban would reduce the ability of service providers to respond to the need for affordable housing. As a result, the approved moratorium was reduced to three years, and limited to the five neighbourhoods considered the most distressed. The problem is, since some building projects approved just prior to 2012 are only opening now, the three-year pause has not been long enough for the community to actually see a period where no additional non-market housing is added to the market. One of the biggest questions in the minds of community members is whether the moratorium will be extended, or whether the pause was simply a small gesture that will not change long-term trends.

The City of Edmonton has set a minimum target for non-market housing of 5 per cent, and a maximum of 20 percent, and has committed to "promote and

encourage" this target. Some have called on the city to strictly enforce the maximum, but an inflexible cap would bring its own complications. For one thing, all non-market housing is not the same. A senior's residence may fall under the definition of non-market housing, but does not affect a community in the same way that a large transitional housing project would.

Edmonton has approved a new zoning policy that allows secondary suites, garage suites and garden suites. The hope is that this policy naturally spreads affordable housing across a wider area and reduces the need for large, project-style, subsidized units. Building affordable housing on surplus school sites is also part of the plan to shift government capital spending to other geographic areas.

With the moratorium set to end in October of 2015, community consultations with the five "high threshold" communities are again underway. The goal is to work with the communities and relevant agencies on a specific plan, and options will be presented to city council during the summer to decide on the next steps once the moratorium is over.

There is no question that the city, the agencies that serve the homeless, and the community members in the affected neighbourhoods all want the same thing: a real reduction in poverty. But community members still need to be convinced that decision-makers are committed to solutions that address the root of the problem, rather than reactive solutions that entrench the status-quo. Different levels of government need to coordinate with each other, communicate policy goals to the community, and fund projects that support those goals. The key to effective community revitalization efforts will be to find a way to more evenly distribute non-market housing

throughout the city. It took years for the imbalance in subsidized housing to develop, and it will take everyone working together to reverse the trend. If it happens, the whole city will be better for it.

Cadence Bergman is a North Edmonton community member who has lived in the area for 17 years. She spends most of her time working in politics and is an avid follower of municipal issues.

Further Reading

¹Edmonton Committee to End Homelessness. (2009). *A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's 10-year Plan to End Homelessness*. Retrieved from: http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/PDF/A_Place_to_Call_Home.pdf



Image: "1 Second" by Danielle Scott (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Working with communities to create innovative affordable housing solutions

**URBAN
STRATEGIES
INC .**



TOD • GROWTH PLANNING • VISIONING • SUSTAINABILITY
URBAN DESIGN • MASTER PLANNING • PLANNING APPROVALS

urbanstrategies.com [f](#) [t](#) [in](#)



CULTURAL SAFETY AND HOME/JOURNEYING IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

JULIA CHRISTENSEN

northern and
remote
communities

As in most Canadian urban centres, homelessness in the City of Yellowknife affects a disproportionate number of Indigenous people, with roughly 90 percent of the visible homeless population being Dene, Inuit, or Métis. However, “homeless” is an ill-fitting label when it comes to the many Indigenous men and women without permanent shelter across Canada. The systemic health, economic, and social inequalities that drive the high rates of Indigenous homelessness on Indigenous homelands are directly linked to past and present colonial relations. Giving attention to the irony of this labeling necessitates a long, hard look at the events, relations and policies that continue to result in a significant over representation of Indigenous peoples in homelessness across Canada.

For Indigenous cultures across Canada, land and family cannot be understood as separate from “home”—they are inextricably connected. Yet settler colonial relations have disrupted Indigenous homes through the dispossession of land as well as through the uprooting of family and culture vis-a-vis the Residential School System, the Sixties Scoop, the contemporary child welfare system and social housing policy. As a social determinant of Indigenous health, colonialism provides the context within which other

determinants—for example, poverty, violence, and education—are situated. My own research on the geographies of Indigenous homelessness in the Northwest Territories (NWT) has demonstrated a profound tension between northern Indigenous sociocultural values and needs and the dominant (i.e. neoliberal, Euro-Canadian) societal norms imposed through northern social policy, which continuously fails to meaningfully and effectively engage with Indigenous values and needs.

Yet despite this, colonial geographies are actively resisted and challenged by homeless Indigenous men and women. Often in direct conflict with established social policy, many Indigenous pathways to homelessness provide important insight into efforts to find or return to home and are consequently implicit in pathways through homelessness. These include rural-urban migration to leave negative relationships, access housing, or be closer to children in the child welfare system; tent camping in order to gain a sense of independence from the rules of a homeless shelter; or seeking out time with Elders as a means of self-care. These efforts can be understood as “home/journeying,”¹ a way to recognize acts of agency that may otherwise be inappropriately understood as contributing factors to homelessness. By attending to examples

of home/journeying, our attention shifts to important home-making practices that expose potential areas for policy and program interventions to support the alleviation of homelessness.

How might home/journeying be supported through social policy? The concept of “cultural safety,” developed by Maori nursing scholars in Aotearoa/New Zealand in response to structural inequities and unequal access to health care, examines power inequities, individual and institutional discrimination, and the dynamics of health care relations in the settler colonial context. The aim of cultural safety in health care is to improve the health status of Maori, as well as the delivery of health services to Maori in ways that are not just culturally sensitive or relevant, but that most importantly embrace the wealth of Maori health-related knowledge. In a similar vein, recent developments in the NWT aim to respond to community health needs through the provision of wellness-oriented services that reflect Indigenous values and health traditions. One of the principal needs highlighted through the 2012 Northwest Territories Minister’s Forum for Addictions and Community Wellness was for community-based, on-the-land mental health and addictions programming.² The Minister’s Forum suggests that there is a growing awareness in the NWT that culturally relevant responses are needed in

order to address effectively the high rates of trauma and substance abuse in the territory. One of the main outcomes of the report is a call for an improved understanding of “how colonization, residential schools and rapid socio-economic change have shaped the mental wellness of NWT residents.”

However, bureaucratic structures continue to fragment home and homelessness, institutionalizing false boundaries around inextricably linked elements like health, housing and social security. This fragmentation in administrative practice effectively disarms individual resilience efforts and makes it difficult to tackle the structural elements that drive homelessness. Significantly, the Minister’s Forum recognized this, arguing that “there is a need to increase awareness that mental health and addictions are related to other problems and can be improved by addressing basic quality of life issues such as housing, income support and education.”

One of the ways in which contemporary northern social policy perpetuates pathways to homelessness is by failing to recognize the home/journeying strategies of homeless men and women, many of which reflect the diverse cultural value frameworks of northern Indigenous communities. Herein lie some important clues about the places where additional supports are necessary to build upon the strength and agency of homeless men and women. While the outcomes of the Minister’s Forum are an important step toward recognizing Indigenous cultural frameworks in northern healthcare, there is an urgent need for similar transformations in approach to other areas of care that directly relate to homelessness, such as housing, income support, child and family services, and the criminal justice system. To meaningfully address Indigenous homelessness, northern social policy must be reoriented towards community- and family-based programming that promotes the inherent strengths of Indigenous approaches to health and home-building.

Julia Christensen is an Assistant Professor in Geography and Planning at Roskilde University and a Research Fellow at the Institute for Circumpolar Health Research.

Further Reading

¹Mallett, S. (2004). *Understanding home: a critical review of the literature*. The sociological review, 52 (1), 62-89.

²Government of the Northwest Territories, Department of Health and Social Services. (2012). *Healing Voices: The Minister’s Forum on Addictions and Community Wellness*. Yellowknife, NWT.

“

Often in direct conflict with established social policy, many Indigenous pathways to homelessness provide important insight into efforts to find or return to home and are consequently implicit in pathways through homelessness.

”

TWITTER IS THE MESSAGE: THE #saddoniveson EPISODE

PAUL MESSINGER et al.

Once in a blue moon, novel means of communication are mobilized to turn the tide of public opinion. In the annals of history, we find game-changing discourse in amphitheatre orations, written declarations, op-eds, and televised debates. And now, we have Twitter. By profoundly democratizing news production, this social media micro-blog has a capacity for making waves. In March 2014, Twitter was used creatively to effectively garner support for a proposed LRT development in Edmonton. A closer look at this example gives us greater insight into the potentialities of this medium in the political arena.

The context was the construction of the south half of the Valley Line LRT. This consists of a planned east-west rail-based commuter corridor in Edmonton, running from neighborhoods in the extreme south-east (Mill Woods) to the extreme west (Lewis Estates). The leg from downtown to Mill Woods was projected to cost \$1.8 billion dollars. The entire Valley Line east-west corridor would complement the existing north-south corridor, virtually doubling the LRT coverage when completed. The plan was for the City of Edmonton to provide \$800 million, with funding from additional partners. The Federal Government of Canada had announced a P3 Canada Fund investment of up to \$250-million. Substantial commitment of funding from the Province of Alberta was needed to complete the project.

Recognizing the need for provincial and federal support, the City had encouraged Edmontonians to express support on a Twitter hashtag, #yeg4LRT, as part of an advocacy campaign. "During the first five days of the campaign, more than 1,000 people tweeted the hashtag #yeg4LRT. A video released on February 20, 2014

was viewed more than 3,000 times on YouTube and reached more than 7,000 users on Facebook." Nevertheless, the provincial budget announced in the first week of March 2014 omitted any reference to funding the new LRT line. Our story begins here.

On March 6, private citizen Dana DiTomaso created a Twitter hashtag "SadDonIveson" that acknowledged the disappointment in the Mayor's demeanor immediately following announcements from Alberta Premier, Allison Redford, and other provincial officials (see Figure 1). As occasionally happens with social media, the medium, itself, is part of the story. Numerous twitter followers retweeted lines like, "Someone give this man either a hug or a kitty"; followed by another "Or an LRT." Others superimposed titles over the photo like "99 Budget Lines – LRT Ain't One" (paraphrasing a hip-hop song),

or "Dammit, I thought I'd get to hear less whining about potholes if we had better LRT."

The creator of the "SadDonIveson" hashtag followed with a more pointed tweet "All I wanted was LRT funding, but this sandwich is okay, I guess" (see Figure 2). This was followed with retweets with superimposed titles over the photo like "Premier travels rich but can't fund a way to help people commute affordably? Damn." Or "Amazing! #saddoniveson is trending."

Switching roles from story protagonist to online conversation participant, Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson sent a playful retweet the night of March 6 with a photo of a carton of ice cream he would eat to soothe his budget disappointment (see Figure 3). Within a short time, there were more than 1000 retweets and favorites associated with the hashtag. The trending social media story was



Figure 1. Sad Don Hashtag (DiTomaso 2014)



Figure 2. Sad Don Follow-Up (DiTomaso 2014)

covered by a national online media website, the Huffington Post.

This was the opening volley of several moves over the next few days that included stories on traditional media and grass-roots efforts directed to influence political officials involved (letters and calls), as well as meetings between the Mayor, the Alberta Finance Minister, and other cabinet ministers.

On March 11, about a week later, a commitment of \$600 million in funding from the provincial government was announced (\$400 million in grants and a \$200-million interest-free loan to be repaid over 10 years). A further \$150 million of federal funding may be available through the Building Canada fund.

Was the use of Twitter the decisive factor in leading to this outcome? We will never know for sure, but it helped—and the unexpected Twitter portion was by far the least expensive part of the campaign. The impact of a Twitter exchange can be summarized as follows: “A simple response on Twitter appears to be a simple and quick act, but it speaks volumes to the users. When citizens feel that their thoughts are acknowledged, especially by a prominent figure such as the Mayor, it can result in a newfound level of loyalty and top of mind awareness. This level of engagement can result in a deeper level of citizen investment in the form of participation and discussion.”

Students in Edmonton drew further conclusions about this episode:

The “SadDonIveson” event clearly proved that citizens have the creativity and initiative to voice their city related

thoughts online. In this situation, Dana DiTomaso was able to spark discussion and bring attention to the shortfalls of support from the Provincial Government. One tweet from a concerned citizen raised more awareness and generated far greater meaningful discussion than any carefully crafted and resource intensive post that the city could produce. This event highlights the importance for the City to provide a platform where its citizens feel comfortable engaging with each other regarding city topics online. Developing and engaging a community online can be accomplished by having the City and its representatives actively listening and engaging with its citizens through personal replies, re-Tweets and ‘favoriting’ or liking posts. Acknowledging the voice of Edmontonians online demonstrates that their voice matters and can have an impact. It also encourages citizens to continue consistent engagement with the City online.

From a broader perspective, the episode vividly demonstrates Marshall McLuhan’s adage, “the medium is the message.” This phrase refers to how the form of the medium influences how the message is perceived. With social media, such as Twitter, citizens and their elected officials can become co-creators of the news, thereby transforming the relationship between the medium



Figure 3. Mayor’s Response (Iveson 2014)

and the message. The making of the news, itself, becomes a participatory democratic process, with potentially changed outcomes. The media still influences the voting populace, but now individual voters can directly influence the media, the message, and those in power.

In the face of a low oil-price economy and a new Alberta Premier, the future of this major LRT initiative hangs in the balance. The Province, however, now appears willing to borrow for such major infrastructure investments. This proclivity toward providing the needed LRT infrastructure is the legacy of the #SadDonIveson Twitter episode of 2014.

The first author, Paul R. Messinger, is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Public Involvement and an Associate Professor of Marketing at the University of Alberta School of Business. Co-authors include the students from his Municipal Service Delivery trial course: Bianca Barry; Victor Chiu; Allison Leonard; David Manuntag; Shuai Ouyang; Daniel Roth; and Lowell Tautchin. Quoted sections come from their joint working paper, “Edmonton Online: Assessing the State of Municipal Online Media” (Term Paper for course BUS 480-X50, University of Alberta).

Further Reading

For information on the City of Edmonton’s YEG 4 LRT public advocacy campaign, visit www.4lrt.com.



THE BUSINESS CASE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

MURTAZA HAIDER and PAUL SMETANIN

Image: "Affordable Housing, Toronto"
by Marc Falardeau (CC BY 2.0)

Adequate shelter is an “elemental human need”—or at least according to Pierre Trudeau’s government when it first introduced major reforms to The National Housing Act in 1973. Forty years later, advocates have decried the lack of affordable housing a “full-blown Canadian crisis.” Thanks to shifting political priorities we no longer see an investment in social housing as an investment in our future. From the perspective of a cost-benefit analysis, however, Canadian cities can no longer afford *not* to invest in affordable housing.

Despite the tremendous growth in wealth generation in Canada—with one of the highest GDP per capita at US\$52,000 (2013)—at least 200,000 Canadians experienced homelessness in a given year.¹ An Ipsos Reid’s poll in March 2013 estimated that no fewer than 1.3 million Canadians have experienced homelessness or extreme housing insecurity since 2008. The growing number of individuals experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity suggests that the public sector must intervene to facilitate the provision of affordable housing. Recent research by the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis (Centre) reveals that investment in affordable housing not only provides shelter to those who cannot afford market rents, but also offers billions of dollars in socio-economic benefits.

The City of Toronto, with a population of 2.6 million, is Canada’s largest city, and boasts the second highest average housing prices in Canada. While housing prices have climbed steadily over the years, wages and incomes have not kept pace with them. At the same

time, periodic economic slowdowns subject a very large number of households to economic hardship, including homelessness or extreme housing insecurity. In addition, many households spend a disproportionately large share of their incomes on housing to avoid homelessness by diverting spending from other essential items, such as nutritious meals or clothing.

Until recently, the case for affordable or social housing was made only in terms of providing shelter for those who could not afford the market rents. The proponents of affordable housing lobby the government, asking for more funds to maintain the existing social housing and to build additional units. Seldom has the case for social housing been made in business terms where all orders of government are able to foresee the overall benefits of their investments in affordable housing.

In spring 2015, the Centre analyzed the economy-wide impacts of investing approximately \$7.6 billion in affordable housing projects championed by the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), which is the Toronto’s largest landlord.² TCHC shelters 109,000 individuals, many of whom comprise low-income families, in 59,700 affordable housing units. The majority of these households pay rents that are geared to their incomes. At the same time, an additional 90,000 households are still waiting to be placed in affordable housing in Toronto.

TCHC’s rapidly aging housing stock, where the average age of buildings is approaching 40 years, is in dire need of investment to keep it in a state of good repair. Already, TCHC has embarked on a \$5 billion investment

plan by leveraging its land assets in partnership with the private sector. Another \$2.6 billion in capital repairs, as part of TCHC’s 10-Year Capital Financing Plan, need to be invested in the housing stock to bring it to a state of a good repair. One-third of the \$2.6 billion (\$867 million) has already been secured. TCHC has requested \$867 million from each of the provincial and federal governments to plug the shortfall.

The Centre used a computer model called *Prosperity at Risk* to simulate Toronto up to thirty years into the future. This approach allows policymakers to view the economy-wide impacts of their investments. Furthermore, it exposes the negative impacts of not making the necessary investments. The Centre estimated that between 2013 and 2043, an investment of \$5.865 billion would contribute \$14.3 billion to the economy. In addition, the investment is expected to create 158,000 person-years of employment. If the federal and provincial governments were to chip in with the additional \$1.7 billion needed to bring TCHC’s housing stock to a state of good repair, their investment will likely contribute an additional \$4.2 billion to the economy and generate 62,700 more jobs. Similarly, the investments will likely result in over \$5 billion in private capital investment and \$4.5 billion in provincial and federal tax revenues.

From a return on investment perspective, social housing investments pay huge dividends. However, this is not all. These investments are expected to deliver huge savings in the healthcare system. Safe and affordable housing creates healthy environments for the inhabitants who are less likely to become ill because of hazardous living conditions.

The *Prosperity at Risk* model estimates 2.1 million fewer visits to hospitals and clinics resulting in an estimated healthcare savings of \$3.8 billion. Also, the refurbished units will consume less energy and generate fewer GHG emissions. At the same time, investments in affordable housing are expected to reduce the crime rate by 15% in the TCHC neighbourhoods. The investment in the affordable housing stock will have a positive impact on the neighbouring properties, which in tandem with cost savings generated because of the reduction in crime and reliance upon social assistance, will likely contribute an estimated \$13.6 billion to the neighbourhood wealth.

The analysis by The Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis clearly illustrates the economy-wide benefits resulting from investments in affordable housing. The case for affordable housing should be made on moral grounds. Still, if one needs further convincing, the economic case for such investments illustrates that all orders of government and society stand to draw huge benefits from such investments. Investments in affordable housing in Toronto will help sustain healthy and affordable neighbourhoods. In return, these investments create a multiplier effect, generating benefits that far exceed the value of the original investments. Investing in affordable housing is, therefore, good for the society, economy, and the public sector.

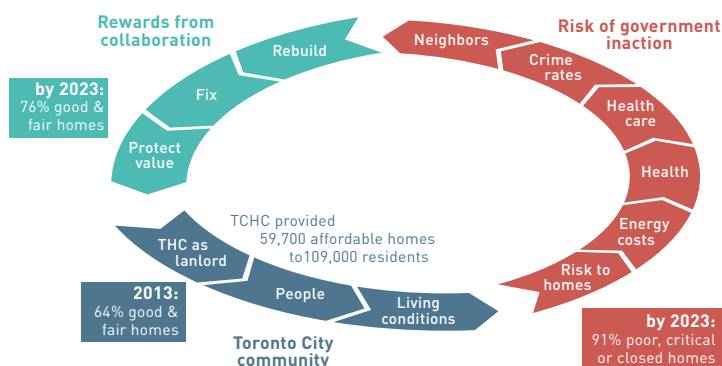
Murtaza Haider is an associate professor at the Ted Rogers School of Management, Ryerson University. He is also the director of Regionomics Inc. Paul Smetanin is the President and CEO of the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis.

Further Reading

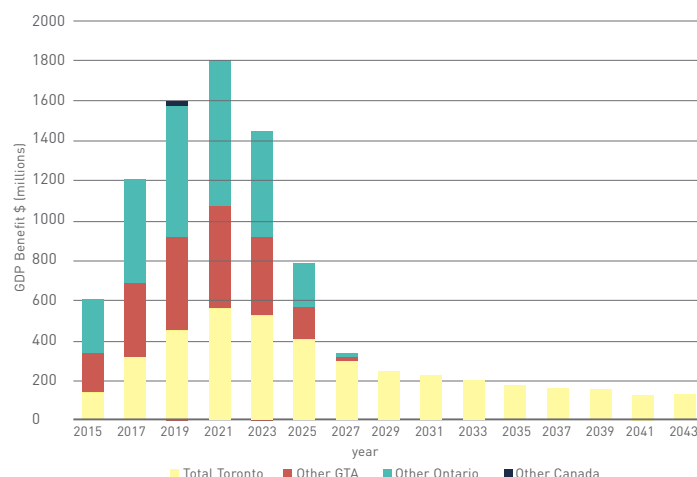
¹ Gaetz, Stephen; Donaldson, Jesse; Richter, Tim; & Gulliver, Tanya (2013): *The State of Homelessness in Canada* 2013. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

²Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis. (2015). *Socio-economic analysis: Value of Toronto community housing's 10-year capital investment plan and revitalization*.

Investment in Affordable Housing By the Numbers



Yearly GDP Benefit from Tripartite Investment



Plaza Three, 101-2000 Argentia Road, Mississauga, Ontario L5N 1V9
Tel: (905) 272-3600 Fax: (905) 272-3602 e-mail: info@watson-econ.ca

Consulting Services Include:

- Growth Forecasting, Growth Management Strategies and Land Need Studies
- Industrial Land Strategies
- Focal Economic Impact Analysis
- Asset Management Strategy and PSAB 3150 Compliance
- Pupil Forecasting, School Requirements and Long Range Financial Forecasting for Boards
- Water/Sewer Rate Setting, Planning Approval and Building Permit Fees and Service Feasibility Studies
- Municipal/Education Development Charge Policy and Landowner Cost Sharing

from the CRSC

INFILL THE _____: WHAT WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT INFILL

KEVIN E. JONES

For the maturing cities of the Canadian prairies, infill has emerged as a critical planning issue related to community resiliency and the ability to manage sustainable growth. It is an issue that connects directly with local communities as mature neighbourhoods transition both in terms of demographics and built form. Here in Edmonton, with the recent publication of a city infill strategy and recent council debates related to infill zoning and lot subdivision, infill politics have come to the fore of municipal politics and public dialogue. It is no wonder that when we talk about infill there is so much to talk about.

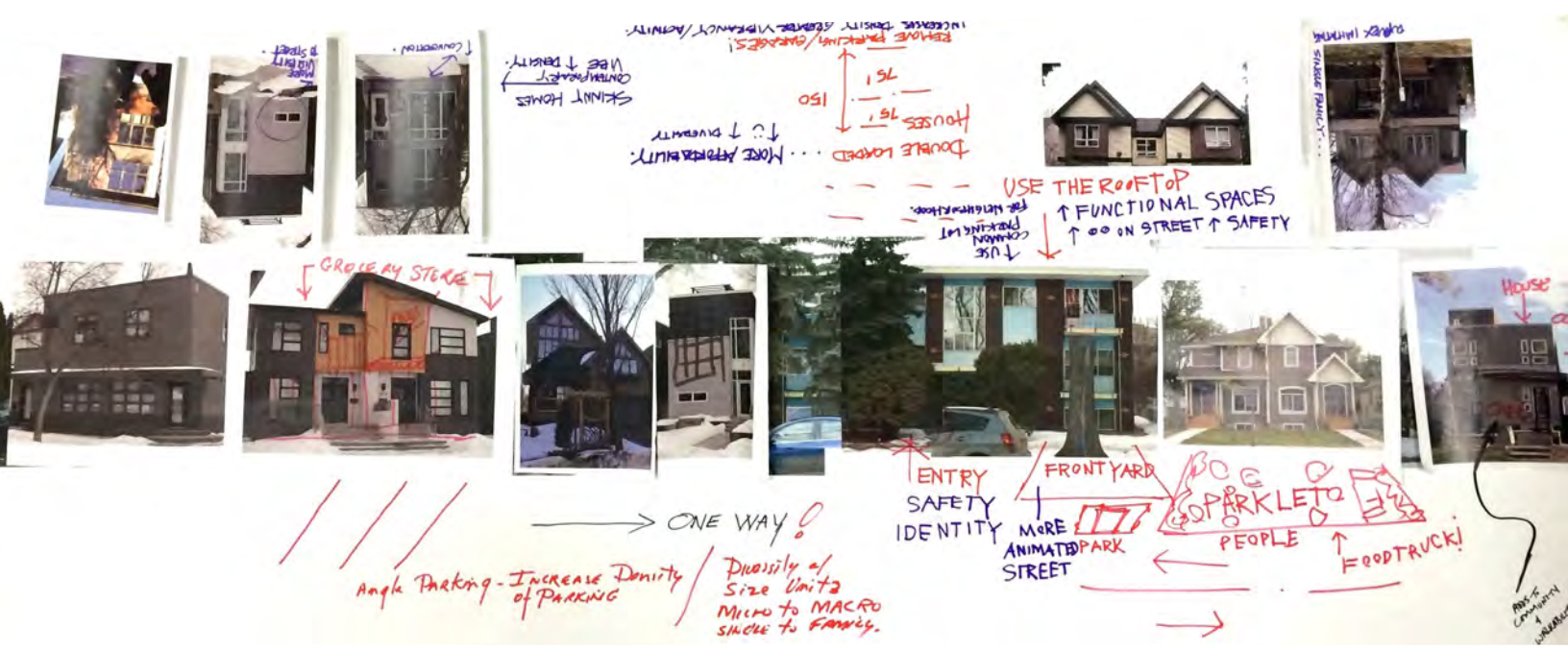
At the City-Region Studies Centre, we too have been engaged in this conversation, recently co-hosting a round of infill tours and public deliberation sessions. The purpose of these tours was to both explore the types of infill emerging in the city, but also to create the space for policy conversations about infill in the city. They provided participants an opportunity to reflect upon the role of planners and

publics in ensuring that infill meets both current and future needs of our communities.

The most straightforward definition of infill is simply that it involves building new housing within mature neighbourhoods. However, anyone familiar with infill politics knows that within this process there lurks a much more complex political landscape. Here the debates can be local and personal. It may be that a looming neighbour contributes to lot-shading or privacy concerns. Poor infill can create a wide variety of concerns raised along a spectrum, including damage to pre-existing houses down to a wide range of nuisance issues. And, of course, infill necessarily alters our streetscapes challenging local conceptions of character and feelings of community. These are all important considerations and city officials and elected councillors need to be ready to listen. Communities should not be asked to accept infill at any cost. However, looking at the city from a vantage point beyond our individual

streetscapes, it is also important to consider infill within a wider conversation about the resilient and sustainable future of the city, including its communities, neighbourhoods and streetscapes.

Beyond simple definitions, the idea of infill carries with it a wide variety of aspirations. Often at the fore of these discussions is density, a growing priority for cities across Canada, seen as a means of supporting local economies, fostering community vibrancy or populating sustainable transit options. In many instances, infill is seen as a means of re-creating density in neighbourhoods where the change in family composition and demography has shrunk populations. Infill could be a solution to maintaining an active community league, keeping a local grocery store or strip mall economically viable or making sure local schools are full. These are all things that many of us would see as supporting successful communities. Other rationales voiced for infill include providing housing



choices for a diversifying population. Cities dominated by single-family bungalows are now trying to create the conditions for providing market choices that address the needs, lifestyles and investment opportunities all of its citizens. This could include housing that caters to smaller families, single tenants or the elderly. Increasing house prices, affordability, and the opportunity to allow a wider population entry onto the property ladder are also considerations, although as new development moves prices up this is far from easy or certain. Other items on the list of proposed benefits for infill include the revitalization of aging (and often poorly constructed) housing stock, space to promote more environmentally sustainable construction or opportunities to diversify design and create new streetscapes.

Any single infill project is unlikely to achieve all of these aims, indeed many of them would contradict with one another. The infill challenge is thus about understanding how new builds can support some of these objectives, and determining in what contexts these values can be realized (or not). This is the more nuanced conversation we need to have about infill.

Getting infill right means addressing choices and negotiating between values. It means making decisions about whether growth happens on the edge of the city, or within its current footprint. We are challenged to determine whether the “character” of one street is maintained while another is identified to support change. Decisions need to be made about how and where affordable housing can be supported in order to be accessible to young families and first time buyers. As planning scholar Bob Summers has noted, family housing needs to adapt to the needs of families today. It means thinking about how our neighbourhood designs contribute or hinder our responsibilities to grow sustainably as a city. And it should be clear by now that doing nothing is also a choice with potentially negative consequences for how our communities will evolve into the future.



How can we engage these challenging questions? And, who can be involved? To date, the City of Edmonton has been considering a relatively narrow range of tools that open up opportunities for infill. This includes adapting aging zoning laws in mature neighbourhoods to permit the subdivision of lots to encourage the building of skinny homes, as well as rules making it easier to build basement and garage suites. These changes may well open up opportunities for infill and a diversity of housing opportunities in an urban landscape (across the city) which is dominated by single family units of similar style and scale. However, these policies do not themselves support the more nuanced types of conversations required, nor will they necessarily deliver all the benefits hoped for. They are typical of the types of tools municipalities employ to structure growth and development. However, is it also possible to imagine processes that more directly and deeply account for community and the depth of issues at stake?

City planners have an essential role in this respect, and have rightly found themselves at the centre of infill politics in Edmonton. Questions are being raised not only for or against infill but also about what the role of planning ought to be in regards to development. It is common for developers to make the argument that planners simply act as facilitators; this is code to suggest that the City should minimally promote positive conditions for the development industry and permit the market to determine what infill looks like in Edmonton. From a different perspective, good planning involves maintaining

current communities by refocusing energies on effective maintenance.

Likewise, an energetic population of new urbanists, designers and architects are successfully lobbying planning to open up opportunities to create more vibrant streetscapes. Cynically, each argument might be dismissed on the basis of self-interest. However, there might be value in the bringing together of all three positions. Successful city building requires positive development, engaged communities and creative experts. In this regard, the City has made some positive steps forward. Most notably the Evolving Infill strategy was informed, in part, by an engagement with members of the public. The recent launch of a toolkit for encouraging community dialogue is also a positive means of creating opportunities for ongoing dialogue. These are useful initiatives, but as infill continues to reshape our city we must find the means for maintaining robust relationships between planning, development and community.

Planners, far from standing in the way of the future of the city, are situated at the intersection of these various stakeholders. As Paul Bedford (former Chief Planner, City of Toronto), reminded us at a recent talk, planners are privileged in their ability to support futures and do so through their expertise and vision, but also through their engagement with communities and city builders. Far from getting out of the way of infill debates, we need planners to lead and broker relations in creating infill that responds to the unique values and aspirations of specific communities. This is different from simply tinkering with zoning and bylaws, but implies engaging communities in planning for the future and supporting positive economic relationships in bringing the communities' values for development forward. The questions requiring our attention are not simply whether we infill or not, but rather are about the ways in which housing contributes to the types of neighbourhoods and cities we want for the future.

Kevin E. Jones is the Director of the City-Region Studies Centre at the University of Alberta.

MADE-IN-ALBERTA SOLUTIONS TO REGIONAL PLANNING PROBLEMS

ALLAN WALLIS

If Alberta is Canada's most urbanized province, why does it lack any substantive urban policy? The "Growing Pains" issue of *Curb* did an excellent job of reviewing some of the principal challenges facing the formulation of such a policy. Jim Lightbody's piece—"Stasis and the Status Quo"—for instance, reflected on 80 years of gross inertia on the part of the Province in either formulating a metropolitan policy or enabling its core cities to do so. Although there was a Royal Commission (McNally in 1956) appointed by the Province and sweeping annexation proposals by Calgary and Edmonton in the 1980s, none of these succeeded in advancing regional governance largely as the result, not of inertia, but of clear counter moves by the Province.

At the present time, as described in *Curb*, both the Calgary and Capital regions are pursuing more collaborative approaches to the formulation of regional plans. This is occurring not because this is perceived as a superior approach (though it might be) but because other options, such as those described in Andrew Sancton's article, "City-Regional Governance for the Prairies," are not politically or culturally feasible in Alberta (nor apparently in Manitoba where, as Sancton points out, the Winnipeg region is following a similar path since abandoning a unicity model).

These collaborative approaches to regional governance should be recognized as significantly made-in-Alberta. The question is whether the Province will recognize them as such and provide them with substantive support. What would such support look like? First, it would involve endorsing the Calgary Metropolitan Plan, which was completed three years ago. It also would provide the regional collaborative boards with the capacity to set infrastructure spending priorities, such as expanding transit over building highways — moves in this direction are underway, but at a nascent stage. Provincial support, moreover, would allow regional coalitions to establish a regional tax base with voter approval. New taxes should go directly and exclusively to defraying the costs of growth and should draw on the economic growth of the regions over and above their current base. Finally, using current discussions on Big City Charters as a means for enhancing regional collaboration rather than intra-regional competitiveness would be another way to support these collaborative approaches.

Are any of these or other collaboration strengthening moves likely to happen? As Jim Lightbody suggests, inertia favours continuing to run in place. Yet surely there is a point where new urban realities compel a punctuating change in direction.

Allan Wallis is an Associate Professor of Public Policy at the School of Public Affairs, University of Colorado Denver, where he currently teaches courses in leadership and ethics, urban policy, growth management policy, and innovation in public management.

A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD? THE STUDY OF COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION COST

OLIVIER SYKES and XAVIER DESJARDINS

If proof were ever needed that transportation is never a dull subject, then the last issue of *Curb*, "Are We There Yet?!" could stand as evidence. In transit debates, as noted by a number of articles, getting the most comprehensive idea of costs and benefits can be a useful aid to decision-making and informing citizen choices to foster more sustainable growth. From a European perspective, it was interesting to learn that the calculation of comprehensive costs around transportation is a less common practice in Canada. While gaining a better understanding of transportation investment costs and benefits could potentially improve transparency and accountability in the Canadian context, it is also useful to recall that any form of project evaluation can be a double-edged sword.

When it comes to comprehensive transportation cost analyses, so much depends on the methodology and what is ruled in or out. For many years appraisal methodologies in the UK, for example, tended to underplay the economic benefits of rail investment as opposed to road schemes. The use to which appraisals are put is also very dependent on the political context. Where there is a high level of direct democracy it may increase transparency, making trade-offs clearer and government more accountable, as is the case in Vancouver—the subject of George Poulos' article on the need for the study of comprehensive transportation costs. In a highly-centralized and more technocratic situation, however, carefully calibrated appraisals may equally provide another means of obfuscating real choices and placing potentially visionary thinking and schemes in the "too difficult" or "too expensive" category.

In transportation planning, traditional political vision and leadership with buy-in from citizens can also deliver impressive results as it has in places like Montpellier, and other cities in France. A visionary and strong leader with citizen support and clear legitimacy expressed through the ballot box may be able to drive through schemes that have clear wider and longer-term benefits—not always captured in classic analyses of costs and benefits. An urban transportation policy is, in practice, not just a product of economic choices and considerations, but also a reflection of cultural values. The boom in public transportation investment in many European cities since the 1980s, for instance, expresses a will to foster more cohesive cities by making more space available for pedestrians and age-friendly public spaces, as well as re-developing and re-valORIZING historical city centres.

Evaluating costs and benefits of transportation options is only one of the many concerns that Canadians and Europeans from core EU states have in common. Other issues, covered in *Curb*, include the need for more sectoral integration and citizen engagement in decision-making processes. Comparative reflection and learning from each other's experiences in different countries will thus no doubt continue to be valuable and enriching for those engaged in practice or research relating transportation and city planning.

Dr. Olivier Sykes is a lecturer in European Spatial Planning at University of Liverpool and Xavier Desjardins is a professor at Paris-Sorbonne. They recently published an article on how rail has shaped cities in France and Britain: Desjardins, X., Maulat, J., & Sykes, O. (2014). Linking rail and urban development—reflections on French and British experience. Town Planning Review, 85 (2), 143-154.

“When it comes to comprehensive transportation cost analyses, so much depends on the methodology and what is ruled in or out.”

Contributions from Curb Readers ...

NOTEWORTHY

- Adj. interesting, unusual, significant

We want to hear from you! Share thoughts on a Curb article, highlights from your community, or other noteworthy ideas with curb@ualberta.ca. Find out more on our blog: curbtalks.com.

COLOURING OUTSIDE THE LINES IN EDMONTON

by CITYlab, City of Edmonton

You've heard of "walking on sunshine," but what about walking on "rainbows"? This June, Edmontonians got a taste of this unique experience when six temporary rainbow crosswalks replaced the usual white crosswalk lines in Edmonton's Strathcona neighbourhood.

The rainbows were installed to show the City's support for the Pride festival, and were made possible through a collaboration between the Transportation Department, Edmonton's CITYlab, and the Old Strathcona Business

Association. Jeff Chase, the Senior Planner for CITYlab, notes that "not only did we get to work together to do something creative, we could support an amazing cause too!"

In the spirit of experimentation, the City developed these rainbow crosswalks to test a placemaking idea new to Edmonton. The results of this pilot project will inform the potential for future temporary or permanent installations, and, so far, community members love the colourful addition to their streets.





Regional Planning Speakers Series & Events

RPSS is an events series made up of lectures, panel discussions and workshops as a forum for dialogue between city builders, community members, academics, and students. Our hope is to create connections, share ideas and build capacity in ways that promote resilience and sustainability, develop robust economies, encourage collaboration to improve the quality of life of communities across the Province.

Social Prosperity

Housing, Homelessness
and Access to the City

The Ephemeral City

Catalytic Urbanism,
Vibrancy and Identity

Ecology and the City

Urban Ecologies, City Growth
and the Ripple Effect

Playability

The Child-Friendly City

Urban Mid-Rise Development

Challenges and Opportunities

For more information about the series or the CRSC visit: crsc.ualberta.ca/en/RegionalPlanningSpeakersSeries



@CityRegions #RPSS



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF EXTENSION



SUBSCRIBE TO CURB!



\$22.⁰⁰ / 1 year subscription
(includes GST and shipping)

+

**A FREE copy of
Strip Appeal: Reinventing the Strip mall!**

Mail to: Curb c/o City-Region Studies Centre
2-184 Enterprise Square
10230 Jasper Ave, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4P6

or subscribe online @ crsc.ualberta.ca/CURBmagazine

* cheques can be made payable to the University of Alberta



NAME _____

EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____

CREDIT CARD NO. _____ EXPIRY DATE _____

CITY _____

NAME AS APPEARS ON CARD _____

PROVINCE _____ POSTAL CODE _____

SIGNATURE _____



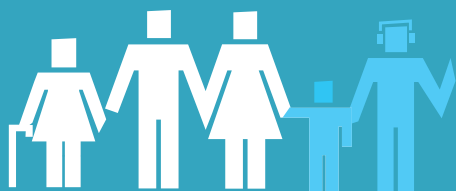
Protostatix

Protostatix Engineering Consultants Inc. is an Edmonton-based structural engineering consulting firm specializing in providing customized, client-specific, efficient structural solutions for residential, industrial and commercial structures. Established in 1981 and proudly serving Western Canada for over 30 years, Protostatix Engineering's experienced staff is dedicated to realizing our client's expectations in a collaborative, cost-effective manner.

780.423.5855 | protostatix@caisnet.com | protostatix.com



Housing Affordability & Homelessness in Edmonton



Who is experiencing homelessness?

A diverse mix of Edmontonians experience homelessness, including young men, families, teenagers and seniors.

In 2014, children and youth (under the age of 24) accounted for approximately 29% of the homeless population.

In 2014, 46% of people experiencing homelessness identified as Aboriginal.

(Source: 2014 Edmonton Homeless Count)

A commonly accepted guideline for housing affordability is that housing costs should not exceed 30% of a household's annual income. In 2011:

- More than 47,000 renter households spent more than 30% of their income on housing costs
- More than 24,000 renter households spent more than 50% of their income on housing costs. These households are experiencing severe affordability challenges

Many Edmonton households struggle to afford the housing they need. Average monthly rent for a two-bedroom apartment increased by 20% between 2010 and 2014.

What's being done?

The City of Edmonton is committed to meeting a wide range of affordable housing needs in all areas of the city. Our current work in housing and homelessness includes:

- Creating a new Affordable Housing Strategy to guide City involvement in housing and homelessness for the next ten years
- Achieving a 20% affordable housing target in the Blatchford neighbourhood
- Creating new affordable housing options on surplus school sites
- Planning for the long-term sustainability of existing social housing buildings through the Social Housing Regeneration Advisory Group
- Delivering the Cornerstones programs, including Housing Opportunities Program for Edmonton and the Secondary Suites Grant Program



For more information please visit
www.edmonton.ca/affordablehousing

Edmonton



1923-7413

ISSN 1923-7413 (Print)

ISSN 1923-7421 (Online)